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THE MAGAZINE ENTERTAINS

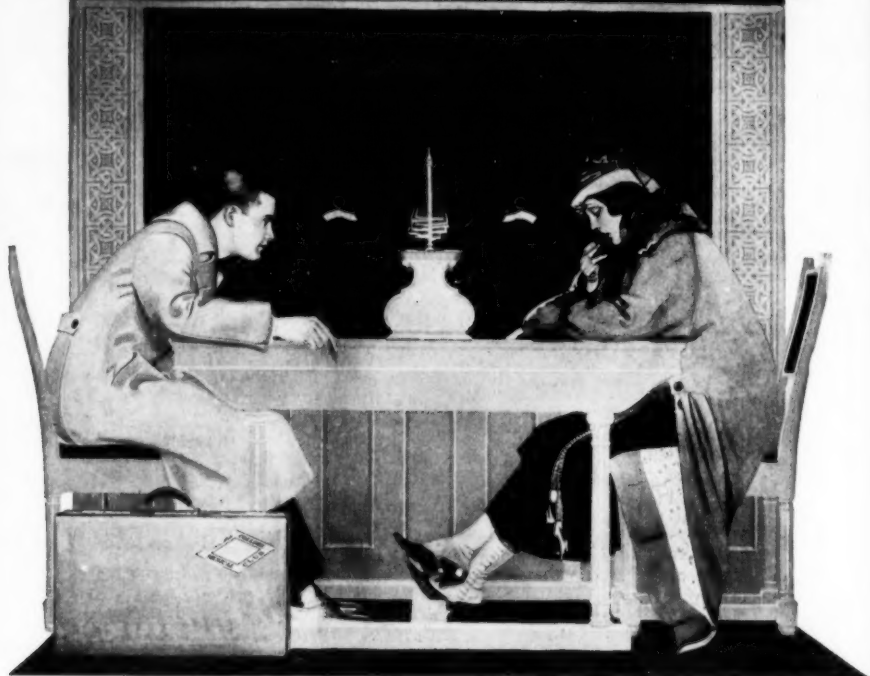


*Complete
Novelette*

THE NOOSE *By* Constance Lindsay Skinner

BERKELEY SMITH & PAULINE BROOKS & NANCY BOYD
ROSEMARY PARKER & PAUL HEDLEY FOX & ALICE TROUBEN

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Vol. XLVI

SEPTEMBER, 1920

No. 1

AINSLIE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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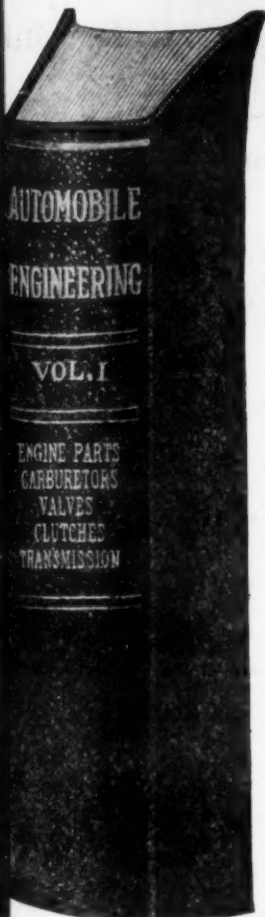
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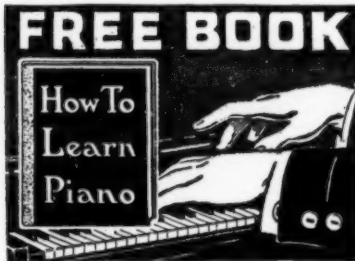


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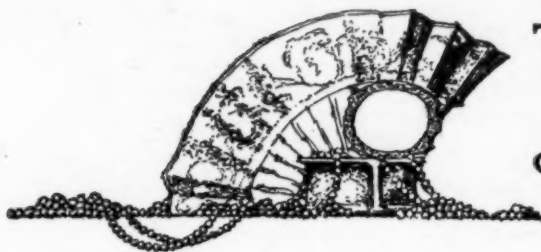
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLVI.

SEPTEMBER, 1920.

No. 1.



The Noose

By

Constance Lindsay Skinner

Author of

"The Trapper's Son," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE three of them were having tea together in the little tea room over Belden's Antique Shop.

At least, it was Hughie Duyker's tea party for himself and Joan Parker. Jack Allenby had sauntered in at five and joined them. Hughie would have preferred to have Joan to himself, just as he would have preferred the Ritz to an obscure tea room. But Joan liked this place. She liked its antique furniture, its old brass hung on the rough-painted walls of what had once been a barn or warehouse or loft, and its tall, seven-fingered iron candlesticks, its old brass bowls of flowers on each carved table. She said that its atmosphere was restful and "genuine," because it was frequented only by persons who had something to say to each other. Whatever might be the subject of conversation at each table—love, work, art, or what not—each couple or group was too self-absorbed for more than a casual glance at its neighbors. Its many habitués did not need music and the promenade of fashion to divert them. They found bare life diverting enough. The subdued orchestra, the distracting decorations and

lights, the movement to and fro of arriving and departing guests garbed for the eye of the beholder, which made the special lure of the hotel tea rooms, would here have been unwelcome intrusions. So Joan said.

This background of solid antiquity, reminiscent of an age when things were wrought or built to endure, the reposefulness of the room set high and back from the quiet cross street, the touch of pure nature in the wild flowers, or the suggestion of an old-fashioned garden where one might putter about with trowel and watering pot among just such pansies, sweet Williams, or wall-flowers as sometimes filled the brass bowls here, made the tea room a place for those whose lives held to purposes, and who required no stinging of the senses to spur them on.

"Have you a purpose, Joan?" Duyker asked idly, as he spread a muffin generously with marmalade. "Awful thing, that—a woman with a purpose. Eh, Jack? Speak up, old clam."

Allenby smiled.

He was leaning back lazily in his chair beside Joan. His dark eyes, noticeable for their almost Oriental velvety blackness and their shape, set in an aquiline Anglo-Norman type of face,

were watching Joan's hand and wrist as she lifted the bowl of flowers and brought it to her face, and sniffed deeply and happily.

"Extra charge for abstracting the scent from the flowers, Joan. Sign on the wall over there says so," Duyker said laughingly. Her eyes twinkled at him across the flowers.

"It will cost Hughie at least a dollar and a quarter," Allenby warned her with a grave smile.

He watched her replace the bowl on the table. She had a remarkable hand and wrist, he thought. It was not merely that they were beautiful to look at, and cool and soft to feel. They were firm and steady. Even the lightest touch of her fingers was steady, with a balanced strength of pressure, a perfect equipoise between brain and muscles. Her finger on the petal of a flower did not make the stem quiver. Who else, he asked himself, could have gauged so perfectly the degree of strength required to lift the bowl, carry it steadily to her face, and set it down again in exactly the same spot and without a tremor of its loosely arranged contents? Not one person in a thousand.

The human race had been using its hands for æons, yet its commonest error was in misgauging the amount of effort required to lift objects. People took hold of things too heavily or too lightly; held them the least bit aslant, so that they couldn't replace them flat, but touched the tabletop, for instance, with one part of the under side of a bowl first. There was always that mere fraction-of-a-second motion. Jugglers trained for years to achieve such unison of brain, eye, and muscle as Joan possessed. He had noticed it frequently. With her it was apparently a natural gift. It was a beneficent gift or acquirement; he could remember the blessed sureness of her touch in the hospital overseas. And her

left hand had the same facility as her right. She had lifted the bowl with her left hand.

"Purpose doesn't mean self-interest-
edness, Hughie." Joan was arguing with Duyker when Allenby presently abandoned his mental interrogations about her and listened to the conversation. "Of course I have a purpose. I am a creation of life. And life has purpose. I have to find out the best way to carry it out. That horrible waste of life in the war happened because men and women had been wasting life in the time of peace, living without purpose or for spurious purposes. Surely, if the war taught us anything, it taught us not to waste life!"

Her low voice, a rich contralto in tone, was eager, intense. But Allenby noticed the absence of gesture or of tensivity in face or attitude, which would have accompanied that tone, almost surely, in another woman. Her wide, green-gray eyes, always noticeably brilliant, seemed to sparkle more only because her black lashes were partly lowered. This was the only sign of concentration which Allenby had ever detected in his frequent, absorbed watching of her face. It was not that Joan's face was expressionless, he told himself, but so controlled.

"If the war has taught us anything," Hughie echoed. "That's the question. Has it? The proper caper is to aver solemnly that it has, especially when talking to civilians. Senators and congressmen and aspirants for office all over the country are fairly oozing with the great lessons of the war."

"It's the new form of the doctrine of vicarious salvation," Allenby's drawl interrupted. "The army of the dead perished to carry a few politicians to glory."

"Oh, no!" Joan said softly.

Duyker laughed.

"Trust Jack always for a clear, brief,

and brutal definition. He hasn't an illusion in life. But to get back to what I was saying. Here we are, three chaps who've seen some war and three pals who can talk plain truth before one another. Has the war made any change in any one of us? *Has it?* Honestly."

"Yes!" Joan declared.

"Well, three separate smashes and three sets of surgeons made several changes in my tissues," Allenby remarked, forcibly taking the marmalade jar from Duyker. "I believe the heart at present in my bosom once throbbled with the gentle ardors of a Belgian hare. And doubtless the reason why I was able to dig my way out of the avalanche of mud, which smothered a score of my men, was that my left arm had been reinforced by a contribution from the ground mole."

"Jack, you are absurd," Joan laughed.

"But I gather that your worried interrogation applies to the soul," Allenby concluded imperturbably.

"It does. Of course you and Joan had four years of it, and I had only one. And your family and your nation were pinched for food and bombed by Zeps while mine were safe and snug. Joan hasn't any family, but no doubt she has friends in Paris who were suffering with the rest of the French. So your reactions and hers may be different. I had a peach of a wound; but it happened so late in the game that, before I was patched up and ready to be sent back, the war was over."

"Lucky youth!"

"I used to think, over there, that if I got back alive and whole, I'd be a different man."

"Deathbed repentance," Allenby interrupted.

"Well, the first thing I found out when I got home was that I was rich. My bright brother, head of Duyker & Sons since my father died, had been filling war contracts and playing the market and exercising himself between

meals in other useful ways, and he'd made a pile. Of course, that began before I went over. But what I mean is, when I got back here I was a pallid and interesting hero with a fortune. No millionaire, but *very* comfortable all the same. The next thing I discovered was that being pale and wealthy hadn't made me at all eager to spurn the world and all its—its—"

"Its rouge pots?" Allenby suggested, sugaring his third cup of tea.

"Fleshpots," Joan corrected, with a reproving look.

"No, I didn't want to spurn the world. As for the fleshpots, I like 'em. I like the style of the pot and I like what's in it."

"Personally, had I the means to become a collector of porcelains," Allenby interjected, "fleshpots would be my hobby."

"I want even more than I've got. And probably a lot more than I'm entitled to," Duyker continued. "I'm sore at labor for cutting my profits and at the government for taxing 'em."

"In other words, you have the natural aversion of the connoisseur for the amateur and the dilettante in his special field," Allenby murmured over the rim of his cup.

Duyker grinned appreciatively.

"I'm keener on a deal than I ever was, and I'm even ready to do all I can to rise in the social sphere toward that goal whereon my sister-in-law has set her heart. The Duykers haven't been so much as to family and social position—strictly zero, in fact; but Gertrude is determined to remedy that, if her looks, clothes, adroitness, and money can do the trick. Weedon has just bought her an emerald pendant which has been the talk of Europe in its day, but you may have seen the spread about it in last Sunday's papers. She expects that emerald to do a lot for her. And I hope it will. If I tried to express my reaction in some of those

terse, brutal, Allenby sentences, I guess I'd say that the Germans nearly stole my world before I'd found out what a jolly good, fat world it was. Now that I *have* found it out, my chief feeling is that I want to skim the cream off it before some other tippy hussar wades in with his stable boots and churns it into a Limburger cheese."

"A savory metaphor, Hughie, and a lifelike portrait of the cheese."

"Upon my soul, if I have one, I don't know why we went to war, beyond the fact that Germany dared us to go in and help lick her. I don't know why I went overseas beyond the fact that I was drafted. Over there I used to think I knew. But by the time the Senate had got through with the treaty I'd forgotten. After the first ten days, I quit hunting up the new countries they'd spotted on the map hanging on the Senate wall to pass reservations about. Life's too short to spend reading reservations on the downtrodden country of Bubblebubble, population of ninety-seven and two-thirds human, with fervid confessions about the inner light which has come to the reservationist's soul from 'that great conflagration, that holocaust of human blood and sacrifice, gentlemen, on Flanders Field!' I've jumped into business with both feet and I'm playing the good old game of 'get there' for all I'm worth. That's what the self-appointed leaders of this great land are doing. Only I'm not trying to cover up my actions with oratory."

"You have no monopoly of the soulful office seeker, Hughie. Don't brag. There are others."

"All right, Jack. Take your share of 'em. I'm not selfish! Now, how about yourself? Are you a changed man?"

"No, not altogether. When I've wholly recovered from the thumping I got I'll probably be as much of a human being as ever."

"That's not saying much!" Duyker

laughed. "I'm not persuaded that you were ever a regular human, Jack. You've certainly got your share of that English reserve which was the great discovery of the war to our correspondents. Why can't you chatter from the depths of your heart, as I do, for instance? Open up. What's the psychological twist in you English that makes you so mum and wary?"

"It isn't psychological. It's geographical. You are an inhabitant of an enormous, underpopulated country. You can freely chum for an hour on a railroad train with a stranger from Oklahoma because you know that, when you separate in the depot at St. Louis or Chicago, you'll never see him again. You can treat him as a neighbor, because he isn't one. I'm an inhabitant of a small, overpopulated island where a man's only hope of privacy is in keeping himself strictly to himself. More than that, business and traffic depend on the individual Englishman's reserve. Hence, the national characteristic. If we stopped to say hello to every agreeable-looking stranger, the omnibuses would be stalled for blocks. Reason it out for yourself while you return me the marmalade."

Duyker threw back his head boyishly and shouted with laughter.

"Seriously, though," Allenby continued, "I'm not a great believer in sudden conversations. The war reached men in two ways—through their interests in life and through whatever idealism there was in them. They realized that mere bodily life, without both the material and, we might say perhaps, the spiritual things they cared for, wasn't worth much. Those who came through alive are more likely to be henceforth more intensely what they were before, and far less influenced by timidity of any sort in the pursuit of what they want. For instance, the Parisian apache, who fought for France and survived, goes back to the under-

world. The courtesan, who scrubbed hospital floors, returns to her former profession."

"No, no!" Joan exclaimed eagerly. "I can tell you a true story which proves you're wrong. There was John Parker, an Englishman who had been a thief, and in prison. Then he had escaped and fled to Africa. There he became a chief of an Arab tribe. They were warriors and brigands. No caravan was safe from them. Then the war came. And John Parker brought his Arabs in to fight against the Turk. He performed feats of personal heroism. He volunteered for a mission of great danger, where there was hardly a chance for his life. And he was killed. The war had changed that man. The thief, the dare-devil, the brigand, became the hero who offers his life for others."

"Parker—any relation of yours, Joan?" Duyker asked.

"No. But I could wish he had been."

"It's a pretty tale, Joan," Allenby said dryly. "Yes, I know it was in the papers and therefore must be true! But I distrust it. It is *too* pretty, with its dramatic conclusion. Death at the peak of heroic sacrifice. Story-book ending! Life isn't so considerate. No, my dear. If there'd been a real John Parker, depend upon it he would also have been the one man who couldn't have got himself killed. He'd have come through and found himself facing all the old problems with all the old devil in his blood. And, if he wanted to be respectable, he might be offered a job as a stool pigeon for the police—under surveillance, in leash, all his days. And he'd kick over the apple cart again before the year was out."

"Why have you no faith? The war has changed those who stayed home as well as those who went to fight."

"No use, Joan," Duyker told her laughingly. "You heard me say just now that Jack hasn't an illusion in life."

"Illusions? Where's the sense?

They only make a fool of you. It's a matter of cool reason. Peace hasn't provided new ways for such men to live. Against the newspaper romance about John Parker, I can set the case of the harlequin, a Parisian specialist in other people's jewels. He was once a strolling player; hence his title. Apparently he was in the war; for he didn't bother the police during those four years. But recently a theft has been committed, which, for various reasons too long to state, the police believe could have been done by no other. There is this difference: The harlequin is not known to have killed before the war. But a knife accompanied him on his latest adventure.

"So much for the harlequin and the change which war has made in *him*. He has a daughter, whom he has trained to his own deftness. Her most spectacular exploit before the war was the theft of an emerald chain worth nearly a million. She appeared among the guests at a ball and lifted the chain from the neck of one of them. Now I am quite willing to believe that Made-moiselle Genelle, of the clever fingers, scrubbed hospital floors during the war. But I'm not so ready to believe that she is doing it now."

"Not unless four years of scrubbing have put her nimble digits out of commission," Duyker remarked, motioning to Joan for more tea. As she poured it, she watched Allenby's face, listening intently.

"Trained from childhood to steal, brought up in the comparative luxury with which the successful harlequin could surround her, schooled in the mimic art to impersonate countesses to the manner born, adventure the breath of her being, without a hint of moral sense to temper her lack of fear—what has the peace we have arrived at to offer a woman like that?"

"Ah, but a woman so resourceful could surely develop something inter-

esting." There was a mocking light in Joan's eyes as they met Allenby's.

"No doubt," dryly. "Hughie, I believe my chief reaction to the war is a large doubt whether the boasted civilization for which I suffered mud and cooties was really worth a lick. We seem to have all the makings of a real world at hand, but we haven't used them intelligently. A civilization worthy of the name would make straight going in peace times more interesting than hazard and chicanery."

"More interesting. That's the point. Virtue and self-sacrifice are dull things in peace times," Duyker corroborated.

"There's something wrong at the source of our civilization, or virtue wouldn't be dull. And there'd be less need of heroic and ruinous sacrifice on the part of the few, because everybody would be pulling the right way. Of course, the harlequin and Genelle are extreme cases with which to try a point of moral. But take yourself, Hughie. You ought to find something more elevating, say, than the great game of 'get there,' as you called it just now. And I something better than dawdling."

"Right you are, Jack, and spoken like a congressman and an orator! I tell you, when I started home from France I was also on my way to reconstruct my country. The way I felt, believe me, Washington and Jefferson had nothing on me. Single-handed, if necessary, I was going to vanquish General Greed and General Graft."

"The Tweedledum and Tweedledee of the political wonderland," Allenby explained to Joan.

"Aid-de-camp Waste hadn't a chance," Duyker went on. "A little doughboy would take the lion of corruption gently, but firmly by its mangy collar and lead it far, far from hence. Then I watched our politicians who had voted us into an army and sent us abroad to fight for great ideals, 'the war to end war,' and all that con stuff. They

were busy undoing our work and insulting our allies to please our enemies, and to gather in the support of the rottenest influences in the country. George Washington himself couldn't do anything to that bunch, even with the hatchet that never told a lie. I'd been dreaming sweet dreams. I woke up, yawned, said, 'What's the use?' and quit my career as a pure young reformer—quit cold."

"How old are you, Hughie?" Allenby asked.

"Twenty-six, teacher, and going on twenty-seven."

"You have seven years coming to you that I'll never get back," Allenby said. "And you'll change your mind by the time you're thirty-four. You're hurt, now. But you'll be all right, later on. Meanwhile, don't do anything foolish." He smiled. "Here's Joan, silent as a Greek statue and twice as handsome, while you rave and I philosophize. Joan, old chap, we're rude to you. But you brought this on yourself when you dared to say that the war had taught us not to waste life in times of peace. You may now apologize for your childish remark, and Hughie and I will forgive you."

Joan looked at him, her eyes sparkling with amusement, and laughed softly.

"I do not apologize, and I will prove to you both that I, for one, do not waste life," she said.

"Nor opportunity?" lazily.

"Nor opportunity, Jack."

"With a heart that does not quake?" he went on, idly teasing her for the purpose of keeping her eyes turned in his direction. Gray? No, they were not gray, except by courtesy. They were like green water with the sun on it. Unusually wide apart, too. Her coloring could not fail to make her conspicuous anywhere. Those eyes, with their black lashes and eyebrows, the black masses of her smooth, satiny hair,

and her milk-white skin, with the vivid touch of rose in cheeks and lips; and the eyes—always one came back to the eyes—they held one like magnets and they revealed less than nothing.

"Joan's heart never quaked in its life," Hughie was asserting. "She's the most fearless creature of any sex I ever saw. I guess I know. When the Huns lifted the roof and one of the walls from our ward and left us staring at a sky bright with stars and twinkling shrapnel, Joan just went on with her knitting—I being the raveled garment she was at work on at the time. She never even dug a finger into me."

"Oh, stuff, Hughie!" she exclaimed. "Courage was the commonest thing at the front. It is absurd to pick any one out as a brave person where all were brave."

"Cool—that's the word. Coolest person I ever saw, Joan. Never twitchy or nervous. Wonderful gift! Soothing." Duyker was talking between large bites at the last muffin. "And a dear, besides," he added. His look at her had something more in it than comradely affection. Allenby glanced down quickly to avoid betraying that he had seen it.

"If you are going to talk about me, you shall talk when I am not here," Joan said. She rose. "I must telephone to some one. Change the subject before I return." She flashed a smile at them both. They looked after her as she went toward the entry.

"Pawlwa has nothing on Joan for gracefulness," Duyker said. He turned to the table again and surprised the expression of concentrated intensity on Allenby's face as he watched the girl disappear. His smile faded, his boyish face clouded resentfully. He asked himself what Jack meant by looking at Joan that way. A sense of alarm and of wrath was roused in him by the sudden suspicion that Allenby no longer looked on Joan merely as a pal. Jack

his rival? The thing was absurd. What could Jack offer her that he himself could not treble? Jack had no money to speak of and he was a dawdler—had said so, himself. He was thirty-four; that was getting on toward middle life, and his health was damaged and his hair a bit grayed by his four years at the front. He was handsome in a way, tall, a trifle slender—greyhound type; dark as an Indian—that was partly tan from years in the East; mouth like a steel trap. But in Duyker's modest opinion, he himself was a better-looking man than Allenby. He was almost as tall, more heavily built, vigorous and young, without any lines round his mouth; and his red-brown hair would not show a gray tinge for many a year. And he was well off, rich.

"See here, Jack," he said abruptly, "I want a show-down. About Joan."

"Well?" Allenby's deep-set eyes, noncommittal now, met his. "You want me to leave you a free field. Is that it, Hughie?"

"In a sense, I do. We're too good pals to beat about the bush with each other. And we both want the best thing to happen to Joan."

"And you are that best thing, eh, Hughie?" Allenby smiled quizzically. Duyker flushed, then laughed off his embarrassment, and took up the challenge.

"Well—yes, I am! I'm younger, richer, and healthier. Joan is a beauty, besides being a dear and a wonder. She deserves a fine home, rafts of clothes, and all the social honors she could carry off so handsomely if she had the chance. I can give them to her. And I'm crazy about her. I never was so crazy about a girl before."

"Sure of that, Hughie, since you admit you *have* been crazy before?"

"Of course I'm sure of it."

"And weren't you sure about the others?"

"Well, naturally. A fellow always is," Hugh answered impatiently. "As a matter of fact, just before I went overseas I almost proposed to Gertrude's sister, Molly Dunton, and she's a peach, too. But I didn't. And now there's Joan. Weedon and Gertrude won't like it a little bit. They want it to be Molly. And I'll have to put up a pretty stiff fight for Joan. But she's worth it. She deserves everything I can give her. How I'll love giving that girl things! For, you know, Jack, I've an idea that Joan hasn't had much, up to date. Pretty lonesome, no family and all that."

"Yes. You're a generous caliph, Hughie lad. And frank. You're a bit earthy just now, with a new shellac coating of cynicism which will wear off in time. But you're all right underneath. You should follow your star—the safe and serene star which shines on persons in your circle of life. You should marry in that circle, some one you know all about, and carry on the same tradition. What do you know about Joan? Your family will ask you that. If some one were to bring you a story about her, you wouldn't know enough to refute it."

"Are you trying to make me distrust Joan?" Duyker asked in frank amazement.

"No; I am merely cautioning you. Go slow, Hughie. That is said for Joan's sake, too. Because, if it turned out badly, you wouldn't stick, old man; and Joan would have to foot the bill. The fact that you and she had been through a few months of the war together wouldn't be enough to offset anything very unpleasant that might turn up. For instance, if you discovered that I'd been a porch climber or a card sharp before the war, you wouldn't stick to me as a pal now."

"No, I wouldn't. Once a thief, always a thief. But what rot we're talking! The point is, Jack, you're not

really in the running. You see that, don't you? I wanted to show you how we stand in regard to Joan; and just what I intend, without any secrecy. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Yes, fair and frank. I haven't your gift of frankness, old chap. That's my training on a little overpopulated island, to keep my feelings under cover. But I can say this: You have everything in your favor, against my handicaps, except one thing."

"Tell me what it is and I'll offset it for you," Duyker demanded good-humoredly.

"I had finished with the illusion of falling in love, some time before the war. No, she didn't betray me and break my heart, as you are imagining. Because there never was a she. I got my experience and lesson by proxy—through the unholy mess my brother made of his life, and of mine and our mother's, too, as it happened. Mad passion and blind faith were stripped bare for me. I know what is in me, and I keep the lid clamped down. I've got past the blissful stage where a man loves what you call 'a peach of a girl' just because she is a peach. But you haven't. You can still fall in love and enjoy it, even look forward to it, because, with you, it is a comparatively sane emotion. I wouldn't love a woman for golden crowns. Because, if my somnolent emotions ever were aroused, I'd be a dangerous maniac."

This statement, made in Allenby's habitual lazy tone, brought a roar of laughter from Duyker.

"Funny, but true," Allenby continued. "But never mind about me. We have only a moment before Joan gets back, and I want to say a word more about you. You should not marry any woman you met under conditions so abnormal for you as the war. The war was your one wild adventure; and it is over. You are not an adventurer by temperament. Your life, both before

and after that one abnormal experience, is a pretty well settled and ordered affair. You like to look a long way ahead and to see clearly just how things will go. And you will take it for granted that the woman you marry is like yourself in that respect.

"And so she will be, if you marry Molly. But Joan? Well, possibly not. You don't know. All you know of Joan is that she is beautiful, intelligent, and courageous. So was Lucrezia Borgia. Now, if I had married Lucrezia, I would have loved her in spite of her girlish weakness for poisoning people. And, if she had tried to poison me, I would have picked her up and carried her far away from her boudoir laboratory to some desert. But you, Hughie— Well, no woman could ever be really first and all to you. If she imperiled your ordered plan of life in your native circle, you wouldn't pull up stakes and hazard life elsewhere with her. You would get rid of her. Marriage is an affair of everyday companionship. What have you in common with a girl brought up in France? Go slow, Hughie. And—look your American girl, Molly, over again. Here comes Joan."

He rose to let her pass to her former seat next to the window.

"Hello, Joan," Duyker said effusively. In spite of himself, Allenby's cautions had disturbed him. "That cold-blooded insular logician on your side of the table has been trying to bust up our trio. What do you suppose he says? Well, for one thing, that we three bully pals don't really know a thing about each other! You know what I mean—er—before the war."

"Ah, but that does not matter to us!" she answered softly. "Before the war? It no longer exists. We are new. We were born of the war. That is our bond."

"Oh, of course—up to a certain point. But as we, Allenby and I, at least, said

a while ago, the war hasn't really changed any of us. I've come back to exactly what I was before. You two can find out all about my past when you come down to Gertrude's and Weedon's place next week for that fête of hers. I don't know a thing about yours. I don't mean that I need to," he added hastily, "but—well, there it is."

"I'd tell you mine, Hughie," Allenby murmured, his half-closed eyes watching Joan's profile, "only it's too long."

"I'll believe the worst and save your time and my own," Duyker said, laughing. "But Joan is too young to have a very long career of crime back of her. I've got just ten minutes before I dive for a train—going out to Weedon's overnight—so tell me the story of your life, Joan. Come across."

Allenby rather admired Duyker's direct, sledgehammer way of going after what he wanted. One had to be an expert dodger to sidestep Hughie. Joan could not answer immediately, because she was lifting the flowers to her face again. She sniffed them in leisurely fashion before she set the bowl down.

"I wonder if they would mind if I took one," she said.

It was as good a way as any to use up a few of Hughie's ten minutes, Allenby considered—if that were her object. The natural thing to suppose, however, was that she took Hughie's question for a joke not needing an answer.

"Joan Parker, who are you?" Hughie's wide smile was a little forced now, Allenby thought.

"I am Joan Parker, Mr. Doughboy, sir," she replied mockingly, with a salute.

"Well answered. Who are you, Joan Parker?" Duyker persisted.

"Only Joan Parker, Mr. Doughboy." She answered, as before, lightly, and saluted.

"You are an American, you claim. Who were your parents? Where were

you born? And, precisely to the minute—how old are you?"

Allenby guessed that the last question had been added to keep up the appearance of badinage, but Hughie was no longer joking. His eyes had hardened; their look of fun was forced.

"Twenty-four—almost. My parents were humble American artists who died, both, when I was very little. They left me to the care of a French family, who had no child. I grew up as if I were French. To think I am now seeing my own country for the first time! You wish to hear something interesting in my history, Hughie? *Voilà!* It is that at last I am in my own country." There was a low thrill of enthusiasm in her voice, but Duyker did not hear it.

"Where are your foster parents?" he asked bluntly.

Joan did not answer at once. She leaned her chin on her hand and looked out of the window down into the court, where two stone satyrs, standing by the empty fountain, turned their faces up to her through the spring twilight.

"Both are dead," she said presently. "They died when the boches came, and the home is no more. All is ended. And I am alone. Just I, myself—Joan Parker, and nothing besides." Her quiet tone, her aloof expression, had a dignity which silenced interrogation. Allenby saw that she had made Duyker uncomfortable, even apologetic, though she had not allayed his doubt. On his own part, he felt a sense of presumption and of admiration. For there was power in her, and of another sort than that which she had exhibited under the Hun's fire.

"Not quite alone," he contradicted her. "You have me and"—he paused—"Hughie. And when Hughie runs for that train, which he has all but missed now, you'll still have me."

"Great guns, that's so!" Duyker exclaimed, jumping up. "I'm late. You're too absorbing, Joan. See you

both at Weedon's day after to-morrow—you know, Gertrude's fête to raise money to buy griddle-cakes and paper doilies for the French sufferers in the war. Wear your medals, Jack. And, Joan, if you own any jewelry, fetch it along. Splurge is the word! The Gotch Detective Agency will be on hand."

"Scotch? What on earth do you mean?" Allenby asked.

"Not Scotch—Gotch. Axel Gotch, detective. He's coming down himself to protect the emerald and all the other gimcracks. So long, children."

Duyker nodded genially and hurried off. He glanced up from the court, saw Joan looking down, and waved to her.

"Confound Jack!" he growled to himself as he hailed a taxi.

He would question Joan some day when they were alone. And he would do it more tactfully. It was just like him, he admitted ruefully, to plunge at things and bungle them. Of course, Joan was all right and always had been. She must be. He asseverated this to himself, but without achieving the peace of conviction. It was undeniably true that he did not know anything about Joan.

And, furthermore, what did he know about Jack Allenby? Nothing, except that he was English, had knocked about the world a bit, was a whale of a fighter, and a witty companion. Both of them knew all about him. They knew about his family, his position, and his money. He was opening doors in America for them, his pals from overseas.

Of course Joan—and Jack—were all right. They *must* be!

Anyway, he grumbled to himself, he wasn't going to meet trouble till he had to. Jack was right about him—he loathed mysteries. Yes, he had the prairie man's mind. He liked to see a straight, level trail ahead of him, clear to the horizon—no sudden dips and

twists. Anything coming to meet him had to be visible five miles off—no place to hide and spring out.

CHAPTER II.

Allenby broke the silence presently.

"Joan, I wonder if your great purpose in America is to marry Hughie."

"You are not well-mannered when you say such a thing to me," she answered, after a moment's pause. Her face was averted still, her gaze concentrated on the stone satyrs below.

"I didn't offer the remark as a politeness. I hoped my abruptness would surprise you into a yea or nay; or into some expression of countenance which I could read. But one does not take you unawares."

"Why are you interested?" she inquired.

"Do you carry a mirror in that diminutive hand bag of yours?" he asked with a slight smile.

"Yes. Do you wish to look at yourself?" she asked mischievously.

"No. But if *you* looked in it, you might see there the answer to your question."

"I *might*; and I might not. To be sure, my face is my sole fortune. But, *cher ami*, I respect you too highly to suspect you of being a fortune hunter." She laughed, a cool little trickle of mirth.

"Joan, do you want to marry Hughie?"

She turned now and looked at him; but his eyes were fixed on the point of the cigarette he held. Her own narrowed a little, as she answered.

"Suppose that I wish to marry. Could there be a better husband than Hughie? He is loyal, warm-hearted. He would take such good care of his wife. He is a dear boy—although he is just a little cynical at present," she added. "But it will wear off."

"Hughie is cynical because he still

has illusions. A cynic is only a person who has exchanged one illusion for another—the illusion that the world is all ideal for the illusion that it is all rotten."

She flashed a brilliant glance at him. Her perfect lips curved in a faint smile.

"Ah! I like you better when you are epigrammatic than when you are inquisitive," she said.

"The advantage of an epigram is that it sounds clever without needing to be so. But my wit is only a mask, while my inquisitiveness is real. Hughie has been talking about you very frankly. And I am wondering why you have not yet said 'yes' to him."

"He told you? Why?"

"If your eyes were not so amazingly brilliant, like emeralds, perhaps I could see past their surface."

"Oh! they are not so green as emeralds," she protested laughingly. "And you evade."

"No, I digress merely. You should not have looked at me. That always makes me forgot everything else. Hughie is a frank youth. He desires also to be square. And, by his own standards, he is. He asked me my intentions and he warned me off the ground."

"Ah, so?" And then she added, "But that was unnecessary. You are not in love with me."

"Unnecessary, perhaps. Futile, at all events. If I am carried beyond my depth by those sea-green eyes of yours, which possess a hypnotic power such as emeralds have for connoisseurs and thieves, I shall have you. It is my fate, or bane, that I always get what I want. I failed only once."

"When? What did you want and fail to achieve?"

"In France. I wanted death, but it eluded me. It was a sort of bargain, not expressed in precise terms, of course, that I was to 'go West.' What

happened? I lived through wounds which would have killed three other men. The last time, you were responsible. You pulled me through. Perceive the satanic plot in which we are enmeshed by your sublime nursing; namely, that I may employ the life you saved to block your great purpose here and to subvert you to my own uses and needs."

"That is nonsense. If you meant it, you would not frankly put me on my guard," she said with an amused smile at him.

"Perhaps that is why I am frank; so that you shall think 'no man who meant that would say it,' and therefore remain off guard."

She answered him gravely.

"If I saved your life, Jack, you owe me gratitude and chivalry."

"Gratitude for my life, dear girl, is an impossible sentiment to any one who knows anything about me, myself included."

Joan picked up her gloves and prepared to put them on. The motion was an abstracted one; she was not thinking of gloves.

"I am grateful for your life, Jack," she said at last, in the low, rich tone which could convey so much.

Allenby glanced swiftly about the room. It was empty but for themselves. He laid his hands on Joan's, took the gloves from her, and began drawing them over her fingers. He felt the cool, firm flesh of her slender palms, the flexibility of her fingers yielding to the pressure of the glove.

"And there is chivalry, Jack," she continued, as if she ignored what he was doing.

"Chivalry is the ribbon that graces the lance hilt of the virtuous knight. But his blade is of the same steel as the highwayman's, whose thrust is the swifter, probably because there are no tangling ribbons on *his* weapon."

His head bent lower over his task un-

til his cheek almost touched hers. She did not move.

"There are instincts older than chivalry, and passions stronger than gratitude. The oldest war, Joan. Your eyes are bright swords guarding your lips. Never sheathe them when I am near. I do not want to kiss you—and be lost."

To Allenby's temperament there was check and forbiddance in her immobility, in her relaxed hands and her unclouded gaze, where rebuke or withdrawal would have spurred him.

"I did not save your life—you say I saved it—to let you lose yourself," she replied. "You will not dominate me, because I do not fear you. What is hidden in you I do not know, but I have no fear of it. You said one true thing a while ago; that, in many souls, the war has killed fear."

"In yours. And in mine. If we come to combat, Joan, let the old gods of Egypt look on. It will be a sport worthy of them, without fear and without mercy."

She smiled, her long, black lashes half veiling her eyes.

"Egypt," she repeated. "I wonder, are you all English, or is there Arab blood in you? Just now you look like an Arab chief, as fierce as the desert"—her low voice was subtly mocking—"with the red blood rising under your dark skin; and smokey red fires at the centers of your black eyes."

"Smoky? I must cut out the cigarettes," he countered in his lazy murmur; but the expression she mocked did not change. "They are camp fires on the edge of my desert kingdom. And who knows? Perhaps, some day, you will cast your swords away and flee gladly to my desert fires."

"I listen to your whimsicalities and I forget my appointment for dinner," she said. Again it occurred to him that her English sounded sometimes like that of a person *thinking* in French and

translating. "Something quaint about the way she talks," Hughie had put it.

"Since you have put on my gloves for me, you may now button them. Then return my hands to me and I will bid you good evening."

He released her hands and rose, drawing his chair aside to let her pass. She looked from her unfastened gloves to him quizzically.

"No," he said. "To hold your hands a moment longer would endanger—you. And, also, I cannot be ordered to button gloves or fetch slippers and so forth."

She laughed mischievously, as she snapped the clasps to.

"Not even a handshake for good-by?" she queried.

"No. And it is only *au revoir*. We meet again on the day after to-morrow at Weedon Duyker's."

"Ah, yes! the *fête* to be given for the poor French."

"That is only one reason why it is given. The other is to allow Mrs. Duyker to exhibit on her breast one of the most perfect emeralds in the world—the pendant of a famous necklace known as The Noose."

"It sounds more like a rope of hemp than a rope of jewels. Why give it such an unpleasant name?"

"Possibly because it has always been unlucky for thieves. But you must get Hughie to tell you its history. The green jewels under your eyelids interest me more."

"My poor eyes! How you make fun of them! It's a shame."

She kissed her finger tips to him. Her mocking smile faded as she saw the smoldering light in his eyes die, the red recede from his face, and his lips compress.

"That pain—it still comes?" she asked gently.

"No. A new pain, Joan." His smile did not erase the lines about his mouth. He took her hand in his, and

put his left arm about her shoulders loosely for an instant.

"*Au revoir*, old chap."

He released her. She nodded to him and went out. A few minutes later he saw her walking rapidly through the courtyard.

About two hours later, Allenby entered the hotel where he lodged.

"A gentleman had been asking for you, sir," the clerk told him when he called at the desk for his key.

"Is he here now?"

"That's the gentleman, with the soft hat, just left of the post. The other gentleman, by the news stand, is with him."

It occurred to Allenby that the clerk's emphasis on the word "gentleman" might be ironical. The two visitors awaiting him did not much resemble, in type, the frequenters of the hotel lobby.

"Tell them I am in, but will be engaged for about ten minutes." He entered the elevator, got off at the tenth floor, and went into his room. He took off his hat and coat swiftly, hung them out of sight, and made a rapid survey of the apartment. He opened the drawers of the chiffonier, unlocked his trunk, and observed the objects lying in the trays. They were apparently as he recalled them. But an inch of thread, which had been barely held by the lock piece of the trunk, now lay on the floor, where it could not have fallen unless the lock piece had been dropped. As Allenby closed the trunk again and turned the key, his somber face had an ugly cast. His lids drooped and his lips compressed into a line. He dropped into a chair and sat there for more than the ten minutes he had mentioned in the message to his visitors waiting below. The fire of recklessness and resentment smoldered in his half-closed eyes. The expression of his mouth indicated the decision of a spirit which was implacable.

The war changed men and women? What did it change in them? It weakened the bodies of some of them, snarled their nerves—those fine, resilient cords, formerly so dependable that brute force had never entered into the game. And it took away the fear to kill. It did not break links holding to the past. And it forged new ones of a metal still to be tested.

To seek death and be denied, to come through and find that only fear was lost; the same mind, the same instincts and desires, but unafraid— Had they considered *that*, these persons who babbled from platforms and in newspapers about the problems of the peace, these socialists and doctrinaires of economics, who thought that everything in life could be settled by the application of a foot rule? Change? Change was an illusion. Perhaps even the death he had sought would have changed nothing for him. That, too, probably would have proved only another illusion, and he would have found himself, in the Beyond, the same man that he had been here. Here, now, to-day—which grew out of yesterday. The problem of the old links must be met here, through the testing of the new, which had been forged upon them.

A chain, steel-strong, wrought of instincts and passions older than humanity, was binding each of them—Hughie, Joan, himself—to a past, and drawing them together. To what end?

He could feel sure of nothing, except that, for each one of them, the war had not been the great hazard. The great hazard was before them. Each was hastening toward it; and two of them, at least, silently, secretly, and without fear.

He rose and went to the telephone. A few minutes later he opened his door to the two "gentlemen" who had waited for him—a slim man with a pallid face, and a short, heavy-set man who stepped as lightly as a cat. Their low-voiced

conference occupied the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER III.

On Thursday afternoon Allenby and Joan alighted from the train to find a beaming Hughie awaiting them.

"Hello, you two!" He grasped their hands. "Come on! See that car there—the sky-blue one? That was little Hughie's birthday present to himself yesterday. Some car, what? See my fancy French 'chuffer' at the wheel—blue uniform and all the trimmings? Style's my middle name. Well, let's forth to Duykersville!"

"Duykersville?" Allenby repeated. "Has your grateful country named a town in her hero's honor?"

"No, Captain Kidder, she has not. My enterprising sister-in-law is the god-mother; and the honor is for herself and not for me. She didn't like 'villa' for three perfectly good reasons. First, she said if she was going to choose something Mexican, she'd prefer Caranza to Villa. I told her villa was Italian, but that got her all stirred up about D'Annunzio. Then she looked it up in the dictionary and found it came from Latin and meant 'farm'—and that settled it. Because the farm is what Gertrude, née Dunton, once of Dunton's Poultry Farm, is trying hardest to forget."

"'Manse' is a useful word," Allenby remarked.

"No class to it. Nothing to make talk. Gertrude gave the matter weighty thought for a whole day—took some of her hair down and the rest off, put on a kimono valued at three hundred and twenty-five dollars, locked herself in her hand-painted boudoir, and had her meals sent up. Weedon and I were just about to tiptoe to bed when she came down, pale and wan, but fired with zeal, and announced her plan. And it sure is a hummer.

"Her recent acquaintance, the dictionary, had informed her that 'ville' was originally French, meaning town. And, after a while, she got the great idea. She decided to have plans drawn for a small model town of about a half dozen old Colonial houses, where, for a nominal rental, some of the ruined French aristocracy from the devastated districts can make their last earthly homes. She figures that if Lord Baltimore colonized Maryland with English nobles, she can colonize Long Island with a string of French dukes and countesses, and be mentioned in the school history books of the future and have a cake or a cereal named after her. So that's why Duykersville."

"How many colonists have you at present?" Allenby asked, smiling.

"Oh, only her own house has appeared, as yet. But the others will be there, in time. Trust Gertrude. I thought the old count would explode when she told him about it this morning. Made the poor old geezer choke on his toast."

"What old count? Hughie, your habit of conversation with total disregard of the speed-laws is bewildering to a pedestrian brain like mine."

"Say, that's right. You never met the count. He's a Pole who has lived mostly in Paris—exiled or something years ago. Lost an arm in the Franco-Prussian War. So you can guess his age. Count Gorski. Ever meet him or hear of him, Joan?"

"Count Gorski? No——" she said, after a pause.

"Gorski. G, not K."

"No, I never met him. But I did not live much in Paris."

"I fancied you knew Paris well," Allenby said casually. He was observing her hand toying with the fringe on her beaded bag. It was the only sign of nervousness he had ever seen her show.

"Gertrude and Molly are crazy about the count," Duyker continued. "He cer-

tainly has grand manners and a flow of pretty speeches. That's his driver in front; he can run any machine made. I've an idea the count was pretty well looted by the boches. - And that reminds me, there are two words you must not say before him. One is 'boche' and the other is 'treaty.' I don't want him dying of apoplexy round our place."

"Count Gorski. Who else is he?" Joan asked. Her hands lay still in her lap now. She was looking out at the landscape. "Your Long Island is pretty," she added, as if the answer to her question was of little interest to her.

"Oh, he has some little job for the French committee or something on emigration. He was down at Atlantic City when those French business men were over here in confab with ours. Weedon and Gertrude stayed over a few days, and they ran into him. And Gertrude corralled him for her fête. In fact, I think it was meeting him that gave her the idea of a French fête. He lends tone. See? But Gertrude's greatest joy in him is that he knows all about her emerald. It belonged to a duchess or something he knew. Say, Jack, you remember speaking of a famous emerald necklace that was stolen?"

"Yes; we were talking of the harlequin's daughter and sudden conversions."

"Well, that necklace was known as The Noose. And Gertrude's stone was the pendant to it. And it was at Count Gorski's house—reception or ball or something—that it was lifted by that lady thief, Genelle."

"Indeed? No wonder Mrs. Duyker is thrilled. Do you hear, Joan? We are about to enter the precincts of an exciting romance."

Joan smiled.

"Well, they got it back, somehow," Duyker went on. "The police, maybe. Then the war came and ruined them. So they broke up The Noose and sold

the stones—for coal and lamb chops, I guess. But, let me tell you, that emerald has *some* history, to hear him tell it. And there's a superstition about it to the effect that it is unlucky for thieves."

"That should make it very safe," Joan said. "Are not thieves and criminals always superstitious?"

"I guess Gertrude is putting more faith in her detectives. There'll be a few standing around. The fête opens with the ball to-night. And, Joan, wait till you see your costume!"

"Costume?" she queried with animation.

Duyker laughed delightedly.

"Listen to her! Joan's just a woman when it comes to clothes, eh? That's the surprise for you two. It's a costume ball! Afraid you'd back out if I told you in advance. Sprung it on you too late. You're to be a rajah or something, Jack, with a turban and skirts. Gertrude decided on that when I told her how swarthy and fierce-eyed you are. She suggested a Red Cross nurse for Joan, but I wouldn't have it. No fancy costume about that; not for Joan. 'Gertrude,' I said, 'you seem to forget that Joan is the most beautiful woman in the world! We will pick a costume for her on that basis.' Then Molly asked what color Joan's eyes were, and I told her green. She suggested a snake charmer. But I vetoed that, too."

"Yes, yes!" cried Joan impatiently.

"But what am I to wear?"

"Shan't tell you. You'll find out in a few hours. There's a corps of dress-makers waiting to fit the thing on you. I designed it from the stunningest dress I ever saw, and I promise you you'll knock the sun spots out of the other women. Gertrude's is Marie Antoinette, out of compliment to France. And Molly is a fairy person from Shakespeare—Titania, with a diamond star on her head. I wanted to go as a pile driver, but Gertrude started to cry.

So I've compromised on the toreador fellow out of the opera. Weedon will rejoice us as that old meat 'ax, Oliver Cromwell."

"And I am to be the rajah of what?" Allenby asked, smiling.

"Oh, the Rajah of Cashmere Shawl or Ceylon Tea. Take your choice. The count and Gertrude are keeping his costume a secret, but it will be something which will coincide with his silvery beard—Moses, maybe." He laughed happily.

Joan's eyes held an affectionate softness as she joined in his mirth.

"Hughie, you are such a foolish young boy," she said.

"And you're a wonder! You look like a poster of spring on a magazine cover, or a bed of lilacs. That's georgette, isn't it?"

"Pale-gray georgette over lilac silk; with a jade pin, a jade bracelet, and a jade buckle—and jade eyes. It makes a wonderful effect with that white skin and jet hair of yours, Joan," Allenby said.

"Who gave you the bunch of violets?" Hughie wanted to know. "Jack?"

"Jack. He met me at the train with them."

"Good for Jack! Didn't know he had it in him. Never gave me any bouquets. See that red-brick house through the trees, shining like new paint? That's Duykersville. Wait till you see the inside. It's as old inside as the outside is new. Gertrude has had the furniture and woodwork antiques. Black-walnut staircase carefully nicked. Rosewood panels looking as if our armored ancestors of the Middle Ages had playfully sharpened their lances on 'em ere they went forth to combat, and scratched 'em with their helmets when they were measuring each other against the wall to see how much they'd grown since the family moved in from the Garden of Eden. It broke my heart

to see what she'd done to the gorgeous mahogany dining table Weedon and I picked out. Had it gouged with a chisel and blackened, and its legs clipped. She says she's not going to have brand-new things in her house, looking as if the Duykers had just arrived. Mind you, the Duykers haven't got there at all yet. But that's Gertrude's way of looking ahead. Here we are. And there she is—with the pendant. I'll bet she wears that pendant in the bathtub. Hello, Gertrude."

A small, plump, dark woman rose from behind a tea table on the wide veranda and hastened toward them, as Duyker assisted Joan out of the car.

"Here are Joan and Jack. The lady is Joan. The gentleman with the Indian complexion is my distinguished friend, Captain Allenby. His medals are coming by parcel post."

"Hughie! How you act!" His sister-in-law reproved him. She greeted both her guests with a hearty handshake and with a warm smile, which brought a like response. Hughie's affection for his sister-in-law was understandable with the first look at her frank, good-humored face.

"So pleased to have you come. Joan's just as lovely as you said she was, Hughie," she went on, linking her arm in the other woman's. "But I'll have to call you Miss Parker, won't I? I do hope you've brought your medals, Captain Allenby. You know, to wear with your rajah costume. You'll want tea. I can't introduce you to everybody now, because they are scattered all over the place. But you can meet the count. He's a dear, and so aristocratic. See that silver-haired old gentleman, with one arm and the carved-ivory cane. That's Count Gorski. Solid antique ivory, every speck of it."

"He! Hold your horses, sister," Duyker broke in. "You've been twice

round the track already. Don't you know the race is over?"

"We Duykers are awful talkers, captain. But you've heard Hughie, so you know. Hughie, you take Miss Parker over and introduce her to the count. I'll bring Captain Allenby."

As Joan and Duyker moved across the veranda to the little group about the tea table at the far end, Mrs. Duyker turned to Allenby with a sympathetic look on her piquant face.

"Hughie says you're not real strong yet, captain. Would you like to go right upstairs and rest?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Thanks. I'm all right," he answered with a trace of embarrassment.

"I saw you walked slower than the others, and I thought maybe— You don't mind me noticing it, do you?"

"I think it is very sweet of you to notice," he said gratefully. "But I'm quite all right."

"I'm so glad. We were awful worried about Hughie all the time he was over there—with so many men getting killed. When I meet a man who has come back out of that awful war, I feel so glad he's alive I can't do enough for him. Why are you smiling? Think I'm silly?"

"No, indeed, I was thinking of an old rhyme about 'little women and big hearts.'"

"Oh!" She blushed. "That's as pretty as anything the count says. Did you ever talk to a detective?"

"A detective?" he repeated, somewhat taken back by her abrupt question and change of manner. "No—that is—yes, I think I have. Why?"

"Then maybe you'll take pity on mine. See that awful glum-looking man, sitting on the edge of the rocker, trying to balance his cup and eat layer cake with one eye while keeping the other eye on me?"

A laugh escaped Allenby, but she continued, undisturbed by it.

"We got him from an agency to watch my emerald. Weedon said to dress him like a footman or a waiter, so as to look like one of the help. But when I was a girl up State I once knew a detective, and he was a perfect gentleman. And I wouldn't do it. It seemed so snobby. So I told him just to come in and be one of ourselves and act like a guest. But he doesn't. Nobody seems to hit on anything to talk about that interests him. Maybe you could sort of draw him out, if you don't mind?"

"I shall be delighted." Allenby concealed his amusement this time. It was a shame to laugh at her, he thought; she was so sincere and so good-hearted.

"That's fine, then. How do you like your tea?"

"Strong, with cream and no sugar," he answered, smiling as he followed her rapid steps to the table.

"This is Captain Allenby, Hughie's chum from overseas," was Gertrude's informal way of introducing him to the group at large. "Count Gorski, my sister, Molly—Miss Dunton." She mentioned the names of a few immediately about the table, and concluded with, "And this is Mr. Gotch, who is so kindly looking after my emerald."

Mr. Gotch favored Allenby with a heavy stare. It was less the look of a man whose suspicions had been aroused than the look of a man whose suspicions were never asleep. Before Allenby could begin to draw Mr. Gotch out, Molly Dunton had monopolized him. She was more diminutive than her sister, though her figure hinted that the war with the flesh, on which Gertrude now entered, was to come later. Her round eyes were blue and saucy; dimples did not disguise the positive lines of her mouth and chin; and her hair, like spun silk, fluffing about her face and piled in a mass on the top of her head, was an orange-gold.

"I know Hughie must have done all

sorts of brave things in France. You'll tell me about them, won't you?" she said impetuously.

Allenby had been answering her eager questions for ten minutes possibly, and making the most of Duyker's quite average war record, when raised tones and laughter distracted him.

"I've been fooling every one of you, even Mr. Gotch," Gertrude was saying. "This pendant is just imitation. Weedon had it made so I could wear it all the time and keep the real emerald locked up. Even the count didn't know the difference!"

"No, madame; I did not. But my knowledge of jewels is that of a lover only, not an expert," Count Gorski said.

Mr. Gotch rose heavily to his feet.

"I'll say I ought to've been informed. Me watching a bright-green piece of glass isn't going to stop some thief from getting his fingers on the real one."

"That's all right, Mr. Gotch," Gertrude said soothingly. "I've got the real stone here. I just wanted to try the imitation on those of you who were most familiar with the emerald. You know—to see if it was good enough."

She raised her hands to the back of her neck and appeared to be struggling for some minutes with the clasp of a slim platinum chain.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in an exasperated tone. "That clasp! If I could see it——"

"Can I help you?" Joan asked. She rose and bent over the back of Gertrude's chair.

"Oh, thanks! If you would, please. The imitation is easy enough to manage. But the real one has a mean trick clasp as bad as a combination lock. You have to push a little knob so small that you can't find it, and pull a little bar that slips away from your finger nails. I tell Weedon I'd like to meet the burglar who could get that chain off my neck without my knowing it."

She had rattled on unaware that Joan now held the pendant in her hand. There was a shout of laughter from Duyker.

"I guess you've met her, sister. Allow me to introduce you to Joan, the dare-devil pickpocket of Paris."

"Here it is, Mrs. Duyker," Joan said, and laid it on the table beside her.

"How—— Why, I never felt it go! I didn't even feel you touch my neck!" Gertrude exclaimed in amazement.

"Mademoiselle has clever fingers," Count Gorski remarked.

Allenby crossed to the table and asked the privilege of examining the jewel.

"It is a beautiful thing," he said. "But the clasp is hardly so subtle as you imagine, Mrs. Duyker. It is such a clasp as one sees ordinarily, abroad, on chains of this sort."

"And I thought it was so safe! But Miss Parker certainly has clever fingers, as the count says. Because I never felt them. I didn't even feel the emerald move inside my dress," she reiterated.

"Oh, Joan's fingers! You should have her adjust a bandage for you when you're perishing of pain to know what Joan's fingers are worth. Joan had four years' practice in touching tortured men so that they didn't feel it. How many of us were there, Joan?"

"I had not time to count. French, British, Canadians, even Hindus, Americans—poor boys, you came so fast! And so many died.—So that what Count Gorski calls my clever fingers seemed to me very clumsy and helpless." She spoke gravely. For an instant her eyes, habitually cold in their brilliancy, flashed a look of gratitude at Allenby which seemed to him to touch his heart like a flame.

"Joan was one peach of a nurse," Duyker agreed.

"Four years," Count Gorski repeated. "You were, then, in France when the war began?"

"Yes."

"Joan has always lived in France," Duyker informed him.

"Ah, mademoiselle, from the moment you appeared I have been puzzled by a memory, or it may be a resemblance. Have we met before?"

"No, monsieur. I would surely remember you," she answered with a gracious bow and smile.

"You are very kind, mademoiselle. But this impression persists with me. I have seen you in Paris. I am certain of it."

"I was not often in Paris, monsieur. Our home was in the south."

"That is strange. Because one regards you but once, mademoiselle, and notes the Parisienne. It may be a resemblance only. Yet—— It will come to me, later. I have an impression of you on a staircase, brilliant lights, a throng of people."

"A resemblance—that is possible. If you have seen Coralyn, the dancing juggler at the Vaudeville, the haunting memory is explained. I have had flowers thrown into my lap, as I drove through the streets, which were meant for her. Coralyn with the green eyes—and the cleverest juggler on the stage." She laughed. "It is very exciting to be mistaken for a famous stage beauty."

"Ah! Perhaps. But I have not seen Coralyn. I go very seldom to the theater. Never to see vaudeville."

"Yet you may have seen her on the street, perhaps in a railway carriage—even more than once. That is, indeed, most likely the reason why you cannot recall a meeting, though the face seems familiar."

"Why didn't you tell me about Coralyn when we were in Paris?" Duyker asked abruptly. "I'd like to have seen her, if she looks like you."

"Oh, I believe she has not reappeared since the war."

"Children, we must not gossip here

Miss Parker will want to rest a while before dinner. So will Captain Allenby, I'm sure. And there are the costumes to be fitted, too. Hughie, you take care of the captain."

Gertrude rose in speaking and led the way indoors. The word "costume" acted like magic. The veranda was soon deserted, by every one but Molly Dunton, Count Gorski, and Mr. Gotch. The latter, appearing very ill at ease, lit a cigar and turned to Count Gorski for sympathy.

"There she goes, with a fortune that can be lifted from her neck as easy as that Miss Parker did it. I can't go along when the ladies are trying on costumes. But, if it's stolen, I'll be blamed for it."

"Oh, Mr. Gotch, nobody's going to steal it in the sewing room! Gertrude's had her dressmaker for years before she began buying her clothes on Fifth Avenue," Molly said impatiently. "And the costumer is responsible for the staff he's brought here with him. They couldn't afford to steal her emerald."

"Couldn't afford it? I've heard crooks give their poverty as a reason for stealing, Miss Dunton, but never for not stealing," the detective said with heavy sarcasm. Then he relapsed into his former gloomy silence.

"Count Gorski, do you suppose Joan—Miss Parker—was that juggler before the war?" Molly whispered so that her question should not reach Mr. Gotch's ears. Count Gorski looked at her with an amused light in his eyes.

"She has not the air of the theater," he said. "You do not approve of jugglers?"

She tossed her head, her eyes snapped.

"Not as a wife for Hughie. And Hughie wouldn't either, if he knew. Hughie is almost like my own brother, count. And I don't want him to make mistakes."

"Ah, no. But surely Mr. Duyker knows Miss Parker very well, and——"

"He doesn't know a thing about her, except that she nursed in the war. I asked him at least a dozen questions this morning, and he couldn't answer one of them. Oh, I wish you could remember where you've seen her before. I'm sure there's something wrong about her. I just *feel* it! She'll look so stunning in that wonderful costume, I'm *terrified* that he'll propose to her tonight. And of course she'll accept. She knows he has gobs of money. I—I—I—just can't bear it because it isn't for Hu-Hughie's best happiness." The blue eyes spilled tears and sobs trembled in her throat.

"Now, dear child!" Count Gorski's fragile white hand rested for a moment on the bent golden head. "I shall remember presently, and, if it is something your family should know, I will not conceal it from you. I will ask my man, the good and faithful Pierre, who remembers for me everything that I forget. He comes now to assist me upstairs. Ah, *tu viens, mon vieux*." He addressed the middle-aged manservant who came rapidly and noiselessly toward him; and, by aid of Pierre's arm and his ivory cane, rose to his feet.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said. "These wars which leave us frail all our lives! But cheer your heart, then, with the thought that your friend did not come home with a stiff knee and an empty sleeve."

Molly, accompanying him to the door, could not understand the words which passed between him and Pierre, but she saw his expression change and heard his exclamation of amazement.

"Are you asking him? Does he remember?" she asked breathlessly.

He regarded her for some moments before he replied.

"He tells me something very extraordinary, mademoiselle. I must consider it very carefully before I venture to

speak of it. And I counsel you to be silent until I tell you more. If you will be on the veranda again, just a moment before dinner——"

"Yes! Yes! I'll be there!" she broke in.

"Good! Then we shall talk. But, in the meantime—silence."

"I'll be a clam. I mean I won't say a word," she amended, as he looked puzzled. Then she ran ahead up the stairs.

"*L'audace de cette fille!*" he muttered. "*Pierre, si nous nous trompons de——*"

"*Moi, je ne me tromperai pas!*" Pierre replied decisively.

CHAPTER IV.

Allenby did not dance. The night was soft and warm, with a mellow moon; and he sat out most of the dances on the lawn, sometimes with Joan, sometimes alone, frequently in conversation with Mr. Gotch. The detective, very self-conscious in the stockings and other garments of Marie Antoinette's page, had posted himself at this point because it commanded a full view of the ballroom and of the beflowered alcove where Mrs. Duyker stood. While he talked monosyllabically or smoked silently, he kept his eyes fixed on the clasp at the back of Mrs. Duyker's plump white neck. He said to Allenby:

"When you are on a job of this kind you want to narrow it down. Even a cat can't watch four mouseholes at once. No, sir. She glues her eye to one. That chain can't be pulled over Mrs. Duyker's head because her coiffure and crown would block it. Any party that undertakes to lift it has got to handle that clasp. I glue my eye to the clasp. The first finger I see poking round it, I'm into that room through those glass doors there like a shot from a gun."

He informed Allenby further, in a confidential moment, that five men dressed as monks, who seemed to be prowling about aimlessly, were his assistants. There were other valuables than the emerald at Duykersville which might tempt the light-fingered gentry.

Allenby could not help seeing how often Hughie danced with Joan, and how Molly Dunton's eyes followed him. Molly was laboring under intense excitement. Even at dinner he had felt that she was surging with it. Frequently he had caught her staring at Joan with a sort of wonder-struck hostility, marveling and anathematizing. Sometimes she had flashed a look at Count Gorski that seemed to urge or to plead. More than that, she had been interrupted by him, gracefully, to be sure, but nevertheless deliberately, as she had flung a sharp question at Joan about her skill in unfastening the clasp. Count Gorski's eyes also followed Joan, Allenby observed; and he thought the expression on the old gentleman's face was not wholly one of admiration.

For his own part, he did not care to look elsewhere when Joan was within view. Hughie's prophecy that she would "knock the sun spots out of the other women" was abundantly fulfilled. She represented Oriental Night. At the first glance Allenby knew where Hughie had found the design of that dress. At a revue, which they had attended several times in Paris, there had been a "Ballet of the Four Nights." Hughie had waxed rhapsodic about the girl and the costume portraying Oriental Night—a tall, black-haired girl swathed in moonlight green and silver, with wisps of silver-spangled black chiffon trailing after her, a silver serpent binding her forehead. Under the careful lighting of the scene, the figure of Oriental Night had been sensuous, mystical, fatalistic. Much of this effect was lost in the brilliant lighting of the ballroom, but Allenby felt it whenever Joan sat

out a dance with him on the moonlit lawn.

But—and here entered one of the odd jests of circumstance—Hughie, who had never seen Coralyn, the dancing juggler, was not aware that the resourceful producer of the "Ballet of the Four Nights" had copied that costume, in its general idea, at least, from Coralyn's, with the addition of the draperies. Her body outlined in silver scales, like a fish, with thin wisps of black-and-green chiffon fluttering from her waist, Coralyn was seen nightly, as the curtain rose, standing at the head of a short flight of stairs holding a lighted lamp in her hand. She rose slowly till she stood on the tips of her silver toes. Then she flung the lamp toward the ceiling, high, danced like a flash of chain lightning down the stairs, and caught the lamp on her hand again as it descended.

The last scene in the ballet was copied from the finale of Coralyn's act: a back drop of Egyptian desert with the Nile coiled among the sands like a huge serpent asleep, a dim-green night with a crescent in the sky just over the horizon, and the silver-scaled Coralyn dancing on her tiptoes and juggling a dozen stars which seemed to flash reflections on the river. In the ballet the effect of the juggled stars had been produced mechanically. Apparently among the fickle and forgetful public, which had once acclaimed the dancing juggler, only the producer of the ballet and Allenby had remembered her act six years after her disappearance.

No silver serpent had bound Coralyn's brow. Her green eyes, like twin snakes, had glittered pitilessly upon those who brought their hearts and their fortunes to her lair to learn how deadly were the fangs of her desires.

Coralyn had disappeared before the war. And, after the war, her Paris, which had once hummed with her notoriety, had forgotten her.

Yes, Allenby mused, it was an odd jest of circumstance which had led Hughie to select that costume for Joan. The sight of her descending the stairs with her light step, her perfectly poised body wrapped in silver and green, her green eyes flashing under the brilliant lights, had struck him like a blow in the face.

When she passed close by him on Hughie's arm or sat at his side, her draperies brushing his hand, it was as if all the mystery, the lure, and the magic of that world of dreams created by the moon had been made flesh and had touched him. He clenched his hand on his knees.

"What's the old count stand for in those clothes?" Mr. Gotch's question broke in upon his thoughts sharply.

"A Greek patriarch."

"I'm going in. I see Mrs. Duyker's taking his arm. Going for a drink of lemonade, likely. She's been fanning herself like a windmill. I'll have to trail her." He rose heavily and sauntered in.

It was Duyker's fifth dance with Joan. He was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, while she retired to pin up a torn end of chiffon. Molly Dunton, a very lovely, if somewhat pale Titania, floated up to him.

"Hello, hero, where's your partner?" she inquired with forced lightness.

"Pinning up her sash. Isn't Joan a wonder, Molly?"

"Yes, of course. But Frenchwomen are naturally different from us."

"Joan isn't French. She's——"

"Now, don't try to tell me what Joan is, Hughie, because you don't know. But then, you're so in love with her you don't care. And Gertrude and Weedon and all of us will just have to make the best of it."

"Why, Molly!" he exclaimed, hurt.

"Are you going to propose to her to-night?"

"What if I am?" he asked belligerently.

"Only this, Hughie: Count Gorski says she is the image of a woman he saw once in Paris under very shameful circumstances. And his man, Pierre, insists that she is *that woman*. He is positive about it. You know, Joan is a very remarkable-looking woman. And she's not likely to have a double. The count says he has known French women all his life and that Joan is unmistakably French, though she speaks good English and claims she's American."

"What rot! I'll ask her about it."

"Yes, do, Hughie dear. Ask her about that *before* you ask her to marry you."

Her eyes flashed, then misted with tears; her lip trembled. She sped away, leaving him with his brow scowling and his enthusiasm dashed. Allenby's warnings came back to him.

"Ah, toreador, why so grave?" Joan called to him gayly, as she descended the stairs.

"Oh—nothing. Let's take a turn at this and then go outside. A little fresh air would do us both good." During the dance—so he thought then—he would arrange in his mind the interview to follow later. But if Hughie had meant to play the part of inquisitor, he should not have danced. With his hand on Joan's waist, it seemed to him that nothing mattered save that he should have the right to hold her in his arms for the rest of his life. The curve of her cheek, her lips, her bare shoulder, intoxicated him.

"Joan—dearest!" he whispered. "Say you love me."

"Do you want me to say that?" she asked, smiling up at him with softened eyes.

"Do I want you to! You're coming outside with me now to say it."

He stopped abruptly by the door and led her out on to the lawn. They passed

close by Allenby, who was sitting on the bench, alone now, since the detective had taken the trail, and went on into the depths of the shrubbery.

"Here," Duyker said. "Sit down. I don't think the others have found this seat yet. It is well hidden."

"It is a good place in which to rest between dances," she remarked.

"That isn't what I brought you here for," he retorted. "Joan, I'm too crazy about you to stand for any more side-stepping. I want you more than I ever wanted anything in my life."

"Are you very sure of that, Hughie?"

"So sure that, if I don't kiss you now, I'll do it in the ballroom before the whole crowd the next time I put my arm round you to dance."

"Then I must scratch your name off my program," she teased. "You must not shock your sister's guests. Oliver Cromwell will put me in prison."

"Joan, you're stalling. I won't have it!" He caught her in his arms. "You know whether you mean to marry me or not. And you'll tell me *now*. I won't let you go till you do."

It was a rash threat, for, as he loosened his clasp to lift her face toward him, she slipped from his arms and, a moment later, was standing in the path out of reach, laughing softly at him.

"How did you do that?" he gasped.

"Ah! You see, you cannot take me by force," she said mockingly. "You tried to make a prison for me, and I escaped."

"You must be an acrobat to do a thing like that," he grumbled. "Where did you learn it? No, don't answer. Because you'll get me stalled again. You've got to give me a plain yes or no. I don't care who you were or what you were in France. I love you."

"Are you sure, Hughie?" she asked gravely.

"Of course I'm sure. I want an answer, Joan." He rose and stood facing her.

"I will answer you, but not now. When the ball is over, if you say the same words to me which you have just said——"

"Well?" impetuously.

"Then, I think, my answer will be yes. And if I say yes, Hughie, I will live up to the bargain in every way. Come, we must go back." She moved away.

"No." He caught her hand. "Kiss me—once. Please, Joan!"

"Some one is coming," she said, snatching her hand away.

Allenby appeared on the path near them.

"Hello." His tone conveyed surprise. "Why are you young people wasting dance music? However, your dance is over, Hughie. And I believe Joan is engaged to me for the next."

They walked slowly back to the lawn, Allenby chatting pleasantly, with an occasional monosyllable from Joan, and Duyker in sulky silence. It was not the first time during the evening that Allenby had intruded on Duyker's tête-à-tête with Joan. Jack with his warnings and his intrusions, Molly with her whispers! Hughie remembered then that he had meant to question Joan, as he had told Molly he would. But she had swept him off his feet, and played with him.

That should not happen again! He would have straight answers from her to all his questions. All the dogged obstinacy and fighting quality in his nature were thoroughly aroused. There would be no more play, and no more of this nagging mysteriousness about Joan Parker's former life in Paris.

"I'll ask the count in plain English what he means," he said to himself.

Mrs. Duyker had not been longing for "lemonade," but for fresh air. She and Count Gorski came out on the lawn presently, followed by the faithful Gotch and by half a dozen couples whose experience of the fox trot in vel-

vet and wig had no doubt enlightened them as to why the dancers of another century were addicted to the unhurried minuet. Allenby, with Duyker and Joan, joined the group.

"My shoes feel full of feet. If I don't sit down a minute I'll die," Gertrude whispered to Joan. With a sigh of relief, she sank down on one end of the marble bench against the small thicket of shrubs which made a patch of shadow on the moonlit lawn. Count Gorski seated himself by her, while Joan, standing close beside her, whispered back mischievously, daring her to kick her slippers off. Gertrude's giggle stopped short with an exclamation.

"What's that? Something rustled in the bushes behind me."

"I don't see anything," Joan replied. "Possibly there's a bird in there, and we have disturbed it."

"Just as long as it isn't a skunk," Gertrude said, drawing her priceless satins about her and rising hastily. "I haven't seen one here yet. But up home they used to romp all over the garden like kittens. The moon seems to get them frisky. There's the music, count. We'll have to go in."

"I'll stay here with Jack. It is his dance," Joan said to Duyker, laying her hand on Allenby's arm. Her voice sounded fatigued. Duyker, frowning, strode after his sister-in-law.

"I thought nothing could tire you." Allenby seated himself beside her.

"Oh, yes, Jack. I'm only human. I want to sit here and hold on to you as if I were only six years old."

She laughed, with a little catch at her breath, and closed her eyes.

At that moment the lights of the house flickered and went dark. Allenby put his arm around her, but he said nothing about the phenomenon of the extinguished lights. His eyes and ears were alert.

"Drop your head on my shoulder and go to sleep for five minutes, old chap,"

he said gently. "I won't let any one catch you. If Tommy Atkins can't sleep on his buddy's shoulder, I'd like to know the reason why."

She made no answer, merely leaned against him and kept her eyes closed. In a few minutes the lights went on again.

"I must not sleep now." She sat up, drawing away from his arm.

"Why can't you lean on my shoulder? Has Hughie been given the right to object?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"When?"

"Why do you care?"

"Tell me. When?"

"I promised to answer him after the ball. Is your curiosity satisfied?"

"No. Why do you persist in trying to select Hughie instead of me?"

"For one reason, which is almost sufficient, you haven't asked me to marry you. You are not a marrying man, Jack; you could not live a quiet, settled life. But Hughie will make life so secure for his wife."

"Do you love him? But I can answer that myself. You don't."

"Not as you mean. But that is just what I do not want—the perilous kind of love, such as a woman might feel for you. Hughie is loyal and affectionate, not fiery and dangerous. And I can be loyal and affectionate to him."

"You have decided? Don't Besides, I shall interfere."

"Attempt it, then. *Je n'ai pas peur.*" Presently she said in a lifeless tone, "There comes your friend, Mr. Gotch."

The detective stepped briskly toward them.

"Miss Parker, Mrs. Duyker would like to speak to you at once, please. She is in Mr. Duyker's den off the library, with her husband, young Mr. Duyker, Miss Dunton, and the count. I'll lead the way."

"I'll come, too," Allenby said.

Joan had already risen. They fol-

lowed Mr. Gotch around the corner of the house and passed through the hall and the library without encountering any of the other guests.

They found a tense group in the den. Weedon Duyker's stern look would have done justice to the old Ironsides whose style of costume he wore. His wife's expression was troubled and combative. Hughie's was miserable, but dogged. Molly, who was standing with her hand thrust through Hughie's arm, was electric with excitement and triumph. Count Gorski sat leaning forward on his cane, his eyes peering nearsightedly through his thick glasses. His man stood behind his chair. Pierre's sharp brown eyes also fixed upon Joan as she halted by the large, flat desk and faced the group on the other side of it. Mr. Gotch took up his station near the door, after satisfying himself that the window was locked.

"Miss Parker, my emerald's been stolen," Gertrude began abruptly. "I'm not one to beat about the bush. It was stolen while I was out on the lawn. I'm sure of that because, when the lights went out just now, I made a grab for it, and it was gone. I'm as sure as I can be that you took it off my neck when I was on that bench in the shadow. Maybe you did it for a joke. I'm willing to believe that. All I want is for you to give it back—right now."

"A joke!" Molly shrieked. "Gertrude! You know who she is! Joke!"

"Oh, be quiet, Molly," Hughie muttered unhappily. "I don't want to hear that story about her again."

"I did not take your emerald as a joke, Mrs. Duyker. I do not play such jokes," Joan said. "I have not got it."

"She's a thief—a famous thief!" Molly broke in again excitedly. "Are you going to let her keep your emerald?"

"That is a serious accusation which Miss Dunton makes against me. I have the right to ask on what it is based."

Joan's face was pale, but her low voice was steady, and her hands, resting lightly on the desk, did not tremble.

"The strength and resiliency of steel," went through Allenby's mind. "They won't break her."

"It is I who accuse you, mademoiselle." Count Gorski's tone was harsh; his cane trembled under the sudden pressure of his hand. "To beat about the bushes, as Mrs. Duyker has said, is absurd. I know now where I have seen you before. You appeared as the Englishwoman, Lady Ballard, at my house in Paris the night when The Moose, of which that emerald was a part, was stolen from the neck of my friend, the Duchesse de Chazarin. I recall you now as I greeted you on the stairway—your face, your eyes—eyes impossible to forget, unfortunately for you. Pierre admitted you. He saw you when you stood near the duchesse, and he opened the door for you to pass out not ten minutes before her daughter cried out that The Moose was no longer on her mother's throat. The Moose, mademoiselle, has been always unfortunate for thieves. Your father, the notorious harlequin, the most remarkable genius of France in the art of theft, was himself immediately robbed of The Moose. The necklace was then recovered, by the police possibly, or returned by the second thief—afraid to try to dispose of it—to the duchesse for reward. You are Genelle, daughter of the harlequin. The war removed him. But you carry on—Genelle."

"Monsieur is mistaken. I am not daughter of the harlequin. Mrs. Duyker's emerald is not in my possession."

"You defy me? What absurdity! You are Genelle. None but Genelle could have unclasped that chain and lifted it from Mrs. Duyker's neck, as we saw you do it on the veranda. It was not clever of you, Genelle, to show

how deft are your fingers. But you could not help it. No. Those hands trained from childhood to such tasks—they have betrayed you."

"I am Joan Parker, monsieur. I do not carry with me proofs of my identity, for I have no reason to expect that they will be demanded. I am not such an important person. What kind of woman I am is known to two men here—Mr. Hugh Duyker and Captain Allenby. Why do you say nothing, Hughie?"

"Oh, Joan," Duyker answered unhappily, "don't you see that that won't work? This hasn't anything to do with the war. Do you suppose I like hearing all this about you now—and to remember you saved my life? It's horrible! How can both the count and Pierre be mistaken? They are positive. If you've got it, give it up. And, if you're in need, we'll help you—for the sake of that time in the hospital."

"We have not forgotten that you nursed Hughie," Weedon Duyker said. "If you return the emerald, I will pay you such a reward as I would pay to some one who returned it, if we had lost it. I beg you not to force us to have you arrested."

"Search her. You will find it. She has not had the time to conceal it." Count Gorski rapped the words out sharply.

"I was just about to suggest that," Allenby said. "Joan has been sitting with me on the bench ever since Mrs. Duyker left us. Of course, Joan, it isn't pleasant." He looked at her gravely. "But it is the quickest way to disprove an accusation under which you cannot afford to linger."

"You wish that?" she asked Duyker.

"Don't you see we've got to *know*?" he answered her. His distress was evident, but his resolution not less so.

"We will withdraw into the library, and leave you and Molly with—er—

Miss Parker," Weedon Duyker said to his wife.

"Don't forget her hair and her shoes," Mr. Gotch admonished from the doorway.

"Jack, did you know anything of this story when you warned me to go slow?" Duyker asked Allenby as they stood on the other side of the closed door.

"I told you to go slow chiefly for Joan's sake, old man. I said that, if anything unpleasant should develop, you wouldn't stick. The woman would always come second with you. This life of yours with its environment and ramifications is first."

"That's true," admitted Hughie. "But nothing that can possibly happen to me in the future will ever make me as miserable as this thing has. I've touched the bottom."

"A wretched business," his brother agreed. "A woman who has risked her life at the front going back to theft—driven back to it, perhaps. There's something damned wrong with the whole scheme of things."

"Ah, monsieur, I, too, have been in battles"—Count Gorski tapped his empty sleeve—"but I have not found that war changes the proclivities."

The silent Mr. Gotch had found his tongue now that events had developed which made their appeal to the professional, minus the social side of his nature. He questioned Count Gorski insatiably on the subject of the harlequin and Genelle and their exploits.

"Always jewelry, eh?" he pondered aloud. "And quite a run on emeralds. Wonder why emeralds?"

"In part, their value. But also their beauty; and there is a superstition about jewels matching the eyes and bringing good fortune."

"To hear you tell it, that emerald necklace, The Noose, never brought the thieves any luck—and this young lady isn't going to match that pendant with her eyes very long, as I see it."

"She has only clever fingers. The brain was the harlequin's. Now that she attempts something by herself, she is caught."

Hughie moved away, picked up a book, and tried to concentrate his thoughts on it to shut out the sound of the words which tortured him. He knew that he ought to be grateful to Count Gorski for saving him; instead, he would hate him to the end of his life.

It seemed hours before the door opened. They filed in.

"She hasn't got it," Gertrude said.

"Impossible!" Count Gorski exclaimed. "Madame, I have made no error in identifying this woman. And remember that her too-clever fingers have corroborated me."

"I will ask you not to leave the house until the pendant is found," Weedon Duyker said sternly.

"You know that I have not got your jewel, because you have searched me. Yet I am still under suspicion merely because Count Gorski says evil things of me?" Joan said. "That is not just."

"If you can communicate with some one who can vouch for you and successfully disprove Count Gorski's accusations—" Weedon Duyker began and left the rest of the sentence, with his opinions, to be inferred.

"I have no friends," Joan answered.

"Nobody but an experienced thief could have unfastened that clasp without Gertrude feeling it. You did that!" Molly snapped vindictively.

"I hoped the search would convince you," Allenby said. "Joan has a pretty theory that service in the war has wiped out all the past and has set up new standards. But you see, old chap," he addressed her directly, "that it hasn't. The only way to prove Count Gorski in error, and at the same time explain your clever fingers, is for me to tell these people plainly who you are or were, before the war. Joan Parker now, but

before the war, Coralyn, the dancing juggler."

Joan turned to him, lifted her eyes to his with a strange and piercing look.

"I thank you, Jack," she murmured with pale lips.

"You know her?" Weedon Duyker demanded.

"I do. I think Hughie will have no difficulty in believing me. He can recall remarks of mine about Joan which indicated a previous acquaintance."

"Yes," Hughie said slowly. "I see now what you were driving at. Yes—I'm satisfied."

"But I am *not* satisfied," Count Gorski declared emphatically, clinging to his opinion with all the obstinacy of old age. "This woman——"

"Permit me to show you how your mistake arose," Allenby interrupted him firmly. "Your impression is of seeing her face and eyes in connection with bright lamps and a staircase. So you said."

"Of course. At his own house in Paris," Molly interjected.

"Yet at first you could not remember her at all. Memory is unreliable, while impressions are very certain. Coralyn's act opened on a staircase. She appeared there in silver and green, and she juggled lighted lamps."

"You do not convince me, monsieur. For I never saw Coralyn. But I *have* seen this woman."

"Nor me!" Molly cried.

"I cannot let Captain Allenby's word be questioned. I owe him something," Joan said. The trace of pallor had left her face. As she stepped to the desk, she seemed to glow suddenly with some electric force. Her eyes were a flash of green between the black fringes of her narrow lids.

"Mrs. Duyker, your lamp has an electric cord, so I cannot use it. But this vase will answer." She lifted a satsuma vase and took out the rose which was in it. She tossed the vase high with

her left hand, kept it tossing, while, with the finger tips of her right hand, she alternately tossed and balanced the rose. Finally, still keeping both vase and flower in mid-air, she returned the rose into the mouth of the vase.

"What do you know about that?" Gertrude gasped, as Joan replaced the vase on the desk.

"Is the exhibition convincing?" Joan demanded.

"Yes, thank God!" Hughie said devoutly.

"What! A bit of clumsy trickery catches you? Where, then, is your emerald, madame?" Count Gorski half rose in his excitement. Pierre touched him on the shoulder, spoke a soothing word, and he sank back into his chair.

"Probably dropped in the grass," Allenby said. "As I told you, Mrs. Duyker, the clasp is not a very safe one. I suggest that Mr. Gotch conduct a search for it, and, at the same time, post some of his assistants so that no one can leave the grounds. Count Gorski, I hope, will bear me no ill will for upsetting his theory."

"No, monsieur. For that, none," he said. "But I have a regard for this home where I have been so kindly received. And I marvel at you, monsieur, that you have knowingly brought into your friend's home the most notorious woman in Paris. Coralyn, of whom men asked whose fortune was she squandering to-day? What cast-off lover, ruined in honor and purse, would shoot himself before her closed door to-morrow? To disprove Genelle by Coralyn—how does that benefit this woman?"

"It frees her of the charge of theft. That was my object."

"Yes, it does that," Weedon Duyker admitted coldly.

"I think one's as bad as the other," Molly said. "Poor Hughie! A woman like that!"

"Joan, I think you'd better come out

into the fresh air with me for a bit." Allenby found the hand he drew to his arm as cold as ice. "We will help Mr. Gotch rake the lawn for Mrs. Duyker's emerald."

She went with him silently. She looked back once before the door closed. But Hughie averted his eyes; his head sank on the back of the davenport. His arm, flung up over his cheek, seemed to shut and bar her from him.

CHAPTER V.

Allenby led Joan past the bench and along a winding path through high shrubbery to a summerhouse.

"I found this place before dinner. We'll sit and chin together for a bit," he said. "No, here, Joan. This looks more comfortable." He indicated a seat which commanded whatever view of the path the leafy shadows permitted.

The summerhouse stood on a knoll. The entrance faced the slanting path to the shrubbery. The back was closed in by a dense mass of bushes, black now in the moonlight and shadowing the grass on the lower level beyond them.

In that darkness something was moving slowly and cautiously, without a sound.

"You must forgive me for what I have just done, dear girl. It was the only way to convince the Duykers. Mere denial could hardly serve, when Count Gorski was so positive. You could hardly expect even Hughie to doubt his word. Think of the circumstances of the theft—in his own house—the woman who greeted him on the stairs—his servant's corroboration. He might have convinced even me, if I hadn't known better. Did I surprise you? Well, I was in Paris a good deal in the old days."

Joan did not answer. She sat with drooping head, her hands lying in her lap. Allenby winced as he heard a long, heartbroken sigh.

"Don't," he whispered. "You did not love Hughie."

"Love? It is not that. Even if I had loved him, to lose him would not crush me. It is that I have been dreaming—dreaming that I could escape from the past."

"But does the old past never stir in you a desire to return to it?" Allenby asked in a low tone.

"No, never."

"I wonder. Now, your exhibition with the vase and the rose, by which you removed the Duke's last doubts—Coralyn has not lost her skill."

"Coralyn could not lose her skill," she answered mechanically.

He added a compliment upon the grace of her performance and, receiving no reply, he reproved her lightly for her inattention.

"I did not hear. I am thinking."

"Thinking what to do next? Why not discuss it with me?"

"No, no! I must finish alone." She shivered or trembled; he was not sure which.

"You are cold," he said. "You should have something more around your shoulders. I'll take off these yards of silken scarf which swathe the rajah's middle."

"No! I don't need it." Her tone was sharp. She caught his hands as they went to his sash, forcing them away.

By a sudden motion he freed his wrists and imprisoned hers.

"Don't struggle," he whispered. "You'll only hurt yourself. Besides, why try to war with me? Your hands acquired a new skill in the war; but they lost something of the old. For instance—I felt them put the emerald into the folds of my sash when we sat on the bench together."

A violent tremor went through her. He felt her muscles stiffen as she en-

deavored to regain her poise. She did not speak. Allenby went on:

"That was why I insisted that you should be searched. I knew you hadn't it. And I hoped the matter would end there. But Count Gorski was too persistent. He is a keen old gentleman, not easily fooled. He didn't believe me. And neither would the Duykers—but for your bit of jugglery. That was enough for them; but he called it clumsy. Clumsy for Coralyn in her best days, six years ago—yes. But I have never admired you more than when you took that desperate chance. It was plucky of you—Genelle."

"*Oh, mon Dieu!*" he heard her whisper.

"Coralyn is an older woman than you, my dear. She was about your age, or more, when she left Paris so mysteriously six years ago. Some years before her disappearance, I met her—in London. And I have reason to remember her. I'll tell you that story later."

"What do you know of me?"

"Let us talk softly, for voices carry far on such a still evening. I know your history and hers. I will flash it on the screen for you in a series of suggestive titles. Coralyn and Genelle, two daughters of the Columbine in a troupe of strollers. The mother dies or wanders off and leaves them; and the father is an unknown quantity. The clever child jugglers are a drawing card, however; so harlequin takes them under his wing. Shortly he sees a more lucrative field for his histrionic and acrobatic talents. He abandons the village green for the Paris underworld. He perfects the education of the clever children. The elder returns to the theater. She has genius in her special art, beauty, and the blood and heart of a reptile; she will have fortune with fame, and without the hazards of a thief's career. The other is not so clever a juggler—only one Coralyn is

born in a generation. But she has more mimic talent, she is more adventurous by nature, she is immeasurably cooler and bolder—fearless. The harlequin, at last, intrusts a great undertaking to her; namely, to attend Count Gorski's ball and to steal The Noose, half a million dollars' worth of emeralds, from the neck of the Duchesse de Chazarin. Within a week The Noose—so unlucky for thieves—has been stolen from the harlequin and recovered by the duchess; the war is on, and Genelle has flung herself into it. You do not contradict even the details?"

"Who or what are you that you know this? *How* do you know?" Her voice was lowered in obedience to his warning, and it was calm again.

"I have been linking it together bit by bit for some months. Some of it I learned only to-night, from you and Count Gorski. But Coralyn—that is old knowledge. Coralyn was my ruin."

"*You*—loved her?" She shrank a little away from him. —

"No, but my brother did. He was a wild youngster and so much my mother's favorite that I didn't count. To make a long story short, he stole—for Coralyn. I made her disgorge and I put the stuff back where it belonged. That is how I know she lacked your courage. You wouldn't quail at the point of a gun. I had him shanghaied on a sailing vessel bound for the Orient. He was saved. But she revenged herself on me by a charge of theft. And she made it stick, with her maid and her manager as witnesses to the fact that I had held her up in her own flat. I had to keep my mouth shut for my mother's sake. And, of course, legally, it was theft on my part. I went to prison, disgraced forever as far as my family and life in England were concerned. I didn't stay there. I escaped and got off to Cairo. Then, the desert. But you know that story—John Parker who did not die like a hero."

"John Parker—you?" she cried in amazement.

"Hush! When the war broke, I had formed a confederacy of several desert tribes. They wanted to fight—on any side. We went down to Cairo with eleven hundred of them, to bargain. They and their pals would go in for the Allies, if I said so. And I would say so—for my freedom. It was not according to Hoyle, but the government didn't dare offend the Arabs. When I was supposedly killed, I was captured by the Turks. I escaped. After a bit, I got transferred. Then France—and you.

"Meanwhile my brother had gone off with another wild one like himself after pearls. A fool for luck! Fortune simply rolled into his hands. The year before the war he turned up in Paris. We are like that—we are one-woman men and madmen about the one. He took Coralyn back with him to his pearl island—at the point of a gun, perhaps. Quite likely."

"I did not know how she had disappeared. We were not friends. I knew nothing of her life after she left us, but what I heard from others—the public scandals. But you— Why is John Parker here?"

"John Parker is dead. But the adventurer in him didn't die. Or the madman. Joan, I could have pretended that I had found the emerald on the grass—and let you marry Hughie. Do you realize that I deliberately made that marriage impossible. But, if you really meant to marry Hughie, why did you take the emerald? Was your talk of marrying him only a blind—Genelle?"

"It is late, is it not? Will the guests be going in perhaps half an hour? Count Gorski goes to-night. Mrs. Duyker mentioned it."

"What has that to do with the emerald?"

"After they have gone you can re-

turn it to her and explain that you found it. If I told her that I took it just for a mischievous prank, she would not believe me now. That is what I meant to do after every one had gone, or to say I had found it, but I see now that no one of them would have believed it."

"You see then that the war has not made a respectable place for you in peace? What will you do to live? I face the same question. We are two derelicts, Joan. We belong together."

"What do you mean?" she whispered breathlessly.

"The respectable world shuts us out, as foes. We know how to war with it. And we have the emerald." He held it on his open palm.

"No! Never! Rather, I will go back and tell them everything. I saved your life, Jack. I will save your soul, too." By a swift, unexpected movement, she snatched the pendant. "I will tell them I made you believe I was my sister Coralyn."

"They'd be furious enough now to send you to jail. What are you trying to make me believe? That a woman with your training and your pluck, your steel nerves, is going to throw away the fortune this stone represents? Throw it away for words called 'honor' and 'right,' which you never heard till four years ago?"

"Yes. I keep my truth, whatever comes. Jack, listen and understand." Her coolness and rigid control broke in a storm of passionate speech.

"Before the boche set his foot on French soil, I felt only a new excitement. I could not keep off the streets where, day and night, the crowds gathered, always growing larger. Then the war was upon us. There were the soldiers, marching, marching—the tread of thousands of feet in unison. Paris was a great drum, beating. It was as if all the feet which had once stumbled or

danced, faltered, trudged to labor, or run to pleasure, gone boldly or stealthily down a million *separate* paths, had now swerved together in one road for one purpose—a great and new purpose. And I said: 'Where are my feet going? In the old path still forever?' And suddenly that was impossible. And I, too, turned into that road. Men died. How fast they died! And I thought, 'All had past lives—some good, others evil—and death cuts them off from the good and the bad past alike. They will be remembered now only as men who served the great purpose.' And I resolved that the woman I had been should die there. For, after all, it was not death, but the spirit of unison and purpose, which had separated them from the old life. If I died or lived, that spirit should save me.

"I was wounded, sent back to Paris. A good friend helped me to go to London and get taken out with the British forces. I changed my name. I took the name of Parker—my hero, who had found his soul in the war, through sacrifice. As Joan Parker I came to America—a new person in a new world—to make my life count in peace as I had made it count in war. There was only one chance in a million that any one would cross my path who knew of my old life. And I determined that, in such a case, I would deny and fight. I would fight for the truth I had discovered—the truth proved in fire—that I never was that other and evil woman. She was a sleepwalker, a body which moved, but had no real being. But I was awake, conscious.

"I thought that, even if you and Hughie knew, it would make no difference, because no one who had come through the war could still believe that anything counted against the soul. But now I see that I was mistaken. And I see, too, that the world will not help me to keep my truth. I must fight for it always and alone—while the world

keeps saying to me, 'Go back, poor fool! Who cares for your redemption?' That necklace was well named. The Noose is round my neck."

She turned away from him and buried her face in her arms on the back of the seat.

"Ah, but that is not all!" Allenby's voice was husky, his attitude tense as he rose and stood over her. "You snatched the emerald from me, to return it to them. After the brave, cool fight you have made, after you have played the juggler, convinced them, outwitted the count, you'll go back and confess that you are Genelle, the thief—make yourself an outcast to be dogged by men like Gotch wherever you go. And why? To save my soul, you say. What is my soul to you?"

"More than my life! When I said I would find safety with Hughie, it was safety from loving you I thought of. We should never have met, Jack—we two gamblers who risk everything on one throw. No—no!" She pressed her hands against his breast, holding him off, as he swept her up into his arms. "There is no time left for love. Coralyn or Genelle—one name is no better than the other. I am disgraced, outcast. But you have a new name and a new chance."

As they stood, Allenby's back was toward the doorway. Joan saw over his shoulder a figure slowly emerging from the shrubbery:

"Make a bargain with me, Jack, for the sake of the love we cannot have. Give me your soul. I will pay with all my life." She thrust the pendant into his hand.

"What do you mean?"

"Take it to Mrs. Duyker—and go quickly. He is coming. I must face him again. The only one I did not deceive."

Allenby turned, with the pendant in his hand, and saw Count Gorski standing in the entrance.

CHAPTER VI.

"Ah, Captain Allenby. And Miss Parker—Mademoiselle Coralyn. I fear I intrude on a delicate situation. Cynical old age invades youth's romance."

He entered slowly, pushing the point of his cane along the floor before him.

"It is dark under this portico, after one has been in the moonlight. And my eyes are failing, like my memory. My good Pierre told me where to seek you. Before I depart I wished to apologize to Mademoiselle Coralyn. I regretted so deeply my hastiness which has resulted so unfortunately for her. Doubtless you thought the past was dead and luried, mademoiselle. A new life and an advantageous marriage were before you. Then I arrived—a frail old man with weak eyes and imperfect memory—and all your plans are ruined. What a misfortune!"

"Do not disturb yourself, monsieur. On the whole, it turns out well." Joan's calm tone and her pose, with head held high, told Allenby that she was again the cool mistress of herself.

"Your audacity is superb, mademoiselle. When one lover turns his back on you, you leap into the arms of another."

"Count Gorski, I don't like the tone of your remarks to Miss Parker," Allenby interrupted shortly. "You are mistaken as to her intentions here. I knew Coralyn long before the war. Our engagement is an old affair, which we kept a secret for reasons which seemed perfectly good to us."

"You knew Coralyn before the war? Indeed! Then, monsieur, you know that *this* is not Coralyn. And I perceive your weighty reasons for keeping secret your engagement with your—confederate. The emerald—"

He pointed with his stick to the loop of chain dangling from Allenby's hand.

"Oh, yes, the pendant," Allenby said casually. "We found it. We were go-

ing in with it presently. Lovers may be excused for lagging on such a night as this. Come, dear."

"Don't move!" Count Gorski commanded sharply. "One does not trifle with me. I knew she had it. I came prepared even for a confederate. My good valet, Pierre, and my chauffeur, Antoine, are behind you, monsieur. They are expert shots. They will attend to you, monsieur. But Genelle is my affair. You would take the emerald and escape with this man, eh? But I am here."

"I took it, yes. It was the only way. How could I say to Mrs. Duyker, 'That man is not Count Gorski. He is the harlequin?' How could Joan Parker recognize the harlequin? How prove her words, unless she also said, 'I know him because I am Genelle?' I took it to save it from you. And I kept silent to save myself."

"The harlequin. Now the story is complete," Allenby murmured.

"If she had felt you try to unclasp it and had cried out, you would have killed her. You, who used to say that only clumsy fools and cowards carried weapons. The war has made your fingers and your nerves uncertain. You, the aristocrat of skill, have become the lowest of all criminals, an assassin. Why do you go on?"

"Bah! The war! Men groveling in the mud and blood of the trenches because a greater thief than any of them had gone forth for loot."

"But it is over, harlequin. I found a new life there. Why not you?"

"Ah, the peace! Four years of hell that wrecks the nerves and wrenches the muscles, deafens, blinds, maims; but, no matter, now we have peace. A pact of brotherhood, safety for all—no revenge on the boche—no gallows, no manacles, no cell for the crowned apache! A castle in Holland for him, and an ax to cut little trees—he who slew the orchards of France." His

voice rose to a cry, without losing its resonance; his frame quivered with the frenzy which possessed him.

"A new world is here. It hangs on the neck of God, green with hope and white with peace, like an emerald set with pearls." He pointed at the pendant with his cane. "We have a treaty. Each nation has thieved, none is innocent; but now each surrenders something for the good of all. A new world, they say. And behold! You made it, you men who lay in hell! Were you assassins, thieves, or holy ones, before the war? No matter. *Sacre!* They have broken the pact; they have stolen the peace. They have carved the great emerald into splinters—to make shirt studs for the profiteer and the politician, earrings for the woman of Babylon. No safety now! Let each thief what he can for himself before the next holocaust.

"And you—the little thieves who once picked the locks of safes and jewel caskets—go back to your trade. Be more bold! You killed many for the great emerald of salvation which we have taken from you. You have won for yourselves only shattered nerves and unskillful fingers. But the war has taught you to kill. And we give you despair and the heart of hate. Go, then. Emulate us; kill and plunder. And, if you are caught, to prison and to death with you, heroes, saviors!"

His voice had dropped suddenly from the fiery peak of denunciation to an irony so deliberate, level-toned, so coldly malignant, that Allenby felt his blood chilled by it. Though he was watching the harlequin, like a hawk, for the first sign of a movement toward Joan, the thought went through his mind: "The theater was *his* place. Waste of power in a slovenly managed world."

"You are young; you love. But tonight it ends. I am old at fifty, broken. You cheated, betrayed me. First in

Paris when you took The Noose from me and returned it. Now, here again. And I avenge!"

"Je n'ai pas peur de toi, harlequin!"

"Pierre, ici! Antoine, tire donc! Tue cet homme!"

There was the sound of feet trampling the path. Two figures, grotesque in their fancy dress, dashed up the knoll.

The stem of the ivory cane did not touch the floor in its fall before the handle whirled at Joan's breast with a dagger at the end of it. Allenby's rush was too late. But strong hands had seized Joan from behind and thrust her aside. The dagger sped into the bushes a few inches above Mr. Gotch's head as he leaped into the summerhouse.

The harlequin cast a swift glance behind him, and saw that the two men in monk's garb at the entrance were not his companions. He was trapped.

"I surrender!" he cried, and threw up his hand.

It was a surprise and gained for him the fraction of time needed for one more attempt to fulfill the desire which had become an obsession with him—to wreak vengeance on the girl who had twice plucked a fortune from beneath his hand. He twisted, bringing all the agility and swiftness of the harlequin into play, and flung his wide, empty sleeve across Allenby's face, blinding him. His hand darted to the breast of his loose garment and came up with a pistol in it. But, although taken at a disadvantage, Allenby was not passive. He anticipated the move, divined its intention, and, unseeingly, grasped the man's arm and deflected his aim.

Two shots cracked almost simultaneously. The whole weight of the harlequin's body hung for an instant on the wrist which Allenby held. The pistol dropped and the body fell.

"Joan!" Allenby cried sharply. In the dimming moonlight her figure seemed to him to be too still in its drooping pose against the arm of the seat.

"I am not hurt," she answered faintly.

"Pretty close. Nicked her arm," Mr. Gotch said. "Got him, didn't I?" He came forward, revolver in hand.

"He had his plans all made. Car drawn up yonder—chauffeur at the wheel—the other fellow, Pierre, slinking up this way to assist in the finish! Two of my men jumped on his back kind of unexpected, handcuffed him, and then tended to the chauffeur. A nice little bag of jewelry in the car. They hadn't loafed on their end of the job while the count was doing society. I'll say that for them. He must have the emerald on him. I'll get out my flash and look him over. Maybe you'd better see to Miss Parker. His shot just grazed her arm—don't think it's anything more than a scratch."

"Is he—dead?" Joan asked in a low tone.

"Yes, he is dead," Allenby replied. He rose from beside the body and went to her. She was dabbing at her arm with her handkerchief.

"Better have mine—yours is too small. Tit for tat. You bound my wounds. I'll bind yours." Then he whispered, "I placed the pendant in his sleeve. No need to tell Gotch about you."

He spoke in a matter-of-fact way, almost brusquely, divining that she would prefer it. She had spent most of her life with the man who lay dead there. She had called him father. And he had sought her life before his own was taken. Whatever her thoughts might be at this moment, not even her lover could help her.

"I guess this is it." The detective held up a small object. "No, 't isn't. What is it? D'you know? He must have thought a lot of it. Had it pinned inside his shirt."

Allenby went over and took the thing from Gotch's hand.

"It is the military cross," he said.

"Well! He must have done some-

thing to get a medal, I guess. I'll tell you that when I heard him make that speech there, he kind of got me going. If it had been at a show, I'd have felt like standing up and yelling like the gallery boys do for Chauncey Olcott. He made it seem like there was something to his side."

"May I have it—his cross?" Joan asked. "I—I—would like to keep it." Allenby laid it on her lap.

"I've got it." Mr. Gotch stood up. "In his left sleeve. Left arm's gone, sure enough. I thought it was part of his make-up, with the silvery wig and beard and glasses. These fancy costumes are swell places for hiding things. Funny thing about me—waiting in those bushes there. I was right on the job when he came along. Heard you and Miss Parker whispering. Just your voices—couldn't hear what you said. Then he started in on that speech—voice as clear as a bell—and I'll say he could talk! I'll say he could! I pretty near forgot what I was waiting there for." He turned to his assistants. "You look after the body. Captain, I guess we'd best go up to the house. You'll want to give Mrs. Duyker back her stone."

He handed the emerald to Allenby.

"Miss Parker, I'd sure like to have seen you when you did your big act in the theater. I'm nuts on juggling and boxing and acrobats. I never saw anybody juggle lamps. I'd sure like to have seen that."

Allenby took Joan's hand and drew it through his arm. "Come," he said gently. "We must return this emerald, which has cost so much, to its owners."

They went along the path slowly, with the detective close at their heels.

As they neared the house, Allenby said:

"Gotch, Miss Parker and I will go into the den. You might very quietly suggest to Mrs. Duyker to meet us there with her husband and his brother

and Miss Dunton, as soon as she can manage it without drawing the attention of her guests."

"That'll be easy. On my advice she's kept it quiet. She sent her sister upstairs for the imitation."

Mr. Gotch departed for the ballroom.

In the den, Allenby led Joan to a huge armchair and deposited her, unresisting, in its depths. He saw that she was very white and that her eyes regarded him with one of her strange and meditative expressions so impossible to read.

"All questions have an answer, dear," he said. "Even when the answer is long in coming. It is not like you to let danger and the sight of death bend you. And it was his life or yours."

"Yes, his or mine. Revenge was his strongest passion," she answered. "He never knew love or good will in all his life. He held his companions to him by fear. He used all his gifts—his education, the superiority of his mind—for that. He was cruel; most cruel to me, perhaps because he could not make me afraid. When Coralyn left him, he did not mind so much, because he said her fear was against her success as a thief. But he began to be afraid I would go, too. And he studied how to hold me. I was fourteen then. He began to educate my mind with books, good plays, the newspapers, and English. He had a fervor for the drama. He would read Racine and Shakespeare aloud and delight in seeing me thrilled, admiring. He perfected himself in English to enjoy Shakespeare."

"He controlled my mind utterly—until that day when the marching feet told me their meaning. Then the cords snapped. I saw everything in a new light. The Noose! I had robbed those who were warring and sacrificing for the great purpose! For all the sons of the Duchesse de Chazarin had gone to the front. I took the necklace to her and told her the whole story. She asked

what reward I wanted and I said only that she should use her influence to have me sent with the nurses. And when, the next year, I wished to go with the British, she was able after a while to arrange that. She kissed me when I left. Her lips were like white paper. All her sons were killed in the first three months. So, I thought, I was separated forever from the past, no longer even French."

She was silent for a space, looking at the medal in her hand.

"Even he at last heard the message of the marching feet. And this proves that, in spite of all his evil years, he had his hour of the soul. He was always fearless, trusting to his wit and his swiftness. Only cowards and fools, he said, used weapons. Fearless in evil. But this cross speaks of courage, with sacrifice. He had his hour."

The door opened and Gertrude entered, followed by her husband, Hughie, Molly, and Mr. Gotch.

"Mr. Gotch says you've found it," Gertrude exclaimed excitedly.

"Recovered it," Allenby corrected. He laid the pendant on the desk. She snatched it and held it tight.

"But how—who—" she began.

"Hold your horses, Gertrude, and give Jack a chance," Hughie protested.

"The harlequin followed this emerald to America. He and two of his band were here to-night. The other two, Mr. Gotch and his operators have put in irons. The harlequin——"

"You don't mean he got off?" Weedon demanded, frowning.

"No. The pendant has lived up to The Noose's reputation of being unlucky for thieves. The harlequin is dead."

"I had to shoot him," Mr. Gotch broke in through a bedlam of exclamations and questions. "He rushed on the captain and Miss Parker—his shot nicked her arm. He was a slick one. A pistol in his shirt front, and a knife hidden in the top of that ivory cane."

"Ivory cane? He stole the count's cane?" Molly shrieked.

"He was the count. I mean, the count was him," Mr. Gotch said.

Gertrude dropped into a chair and let her pendant slip from her fingers to the desk.

"I don't believe it," she said. "The count? Why, the count was the most perfect gentleman I ever saw!"

"He was a darned fine actor. I'll say he was!" Mr. Gotch admitted. "The captain here put me wise to him. It seems the harlequin was nuts on emeralds. When The Noose was broken up and sold, he figured on getting as many of the stones as he could. He went over to London. There was a rich Jew collector—what's his name?"

"Rudolph Abrams," Allenby answered.

"Well, this man Abrams had some of them—six, was it?"

"Yes. There were twelve large emeralds in The Noose. Then the largest—the pendant. Thirteen—which perhaps first inspired the tradition of bad luck," Allenby said.

"Well, Harlequin had lost an arm in the war and his nerve wasn't what it had been. He slipped up, somehow. Didn't get the stones. But he ran a knife through this Abrams. The police over there, knowing his fancy for emeralds, felt pretty sure it was Harlequin who'd done the job, though he never used a weapon before, not that they know of. Then there was a lot of stuff, the captain says, in the papers about the American millionaire, Weedon Duyker, buying this pendant. And, putting a lot of small clues together, they figured Harlequin had got off to America and would make a play for the pendant. Your brother told the captain about our agency being called in for the ball. And he got in touch with me. Funny you introducing us on the porch to-day. But that was all in the game. I mean the captain and me act-

ing as if we'd never seen each other. We had a talk in his hotel the other night. Well, it's over now. But I'll always have pleasant memories of the time I worked with a man from Scotland Yard."

"Scotland Yard! You, Jack?" Hughie stared at his chum.

"Oh, yes—me. Sherlock Hawkshawe Manhunter, Esquire. I told you that that was the sort of career peace offered to the returned soldier."

"I'd never have guessed it! You are a close one! It'll take me weeks to figure everything out."

"Why did the count—I mean the harlequin—accuse Miss Parker? That part of it isn't explained," Molly Dunton declared.

"Ah, that is too long a story for me to tell it to you to-night," Allenby answered. "He recognized her as the woman who had recovered the necklace from him in nineteen-fourteen and returned it to its owner. He feared that that woman might recognize the harlequin—unless he struck first."

"You mean she isn't a juggler or a thief or anything like that?" she persisted.

"No, she isn't anything like that," he replied in an authoritative tone which stopped her questions, though her expression indicated that she was still unconvinced.

"Here's some more of your jewelry, Mrs. Duyker." Mr. Gotch put a package on the table. "These fancy clothes are swell hiding places. I almost went off with that in my satin shirt. I guess when Pierre switched the lights off it was a signal to tell the count they had the stuff, and for him to nab the emerald and be on his way. Well, I'll say good night and be on my way. Captain," as he shook hands with Allenby, "I've got to tell you what's on my mind. I've seen you, that's won the Distinguished Service Order for helping arrest the Hun, turn in after the war and

not think yourself above working for the law in a case like this. It's done this for me: When anybody says to me, 'Gotch, you're nothing but a common dick,' well, I'll say, 'I know it; and it don't make me feel small!' There's more ways than one for a man to 'do his bit,' as you doughboys call it. Well, good night all!"

"We must go back to our guests, Gertrude," her husband said.

"That's right." She rose. "But first I guess I've got to try and square myself with Miss Parker."

"We can't. At least I can't," Hughie Duyker said. He looked at Joan with the miserable eyes of a boy punished and ashamed.

"Don't think of that any more. It is all past," Joan said. "We're just as good pals as ever, Hughie."

"Do you mean it?" he asked eagerly. For answer she gave him her hand.

"Is your real name Parker?" the irrepressible Molly wanted to know.

"Until to-morrow," Allenby answered, without giving Joan time to speak. "After that, it will be Allenby. Now, perhaps we'd better say good night. Joan is used up. And so am I."

"Captain, you and Joan stay right here for half an hour, and I'll send some supper in to you," Gertrude said. "And you're not going off to New York to-morrow, unless you haven't got the license yet. You're going to be married right here! Come on, children; leave them alone."

She went swiftly to Joan and kissed her.

"What's that?" she asked, catching sight of the cross in Joan's hand.

"Harlequin's medal—for valor in the war."

Joan leaned forward and laid the dull cross with its bit of soiled ribbon on the table beside the gleaming emerald in its setting of pearls. Gertrude looked from the one to the other for a moment in silence.

"Oh, that just makes me sick!" she said. Her warm, brown eyes filled with tears. "Weedon, look at them! That dingy, dinky, little medal he got for being heroic and losing his arm; and that bit of—of—green rock—for that's all it is—he was killed trying to get. Isn't it awful?"

"Yes, it is. But he cared more for the bit of green rock than for his medal and all the war service it represented."

"So did we!" she flashed back at him.

"Look how we treated Joan. Did her war service—even nursing Hughie—count with us a minute when we thought she had that stone? We were so worked up over that toy there that we'd have sent even Pershing to jail to get it back. We were ready to believe anything bad about any one, and go the limit against them, just because we'd been hit in our pockets."

"But, Gertrude, we have to draw the line somewhere!" Molly exclaimed.

"And a thief——"

"You and Hughie are only children, Molly. You can't be expected to have deep thoughts. But I'm getting some of the deepest ones I ever had, right now. Darned selfishness! That's what's the matter with the world—from the kaiser to the labor unions and the profiteers and the party politicians and the thieves and the Duykers. Darned selfishness and putting all the values on things that don't count! The Duykers are going to quit it."

She put her hand through her husband's.

"Come on, Weedon. We've got to speed our parting guests. I haven't time to start reforming the world, or even this family, to-night. But I'll give up to-morrow to getting an idea. I'm not going to colonize with French aristocrats. I'm going to find a way to help men like that harlequin."

"You can't colonize Long Island with ex-thieves, my dear. The rest of the inhabitants wouldn't stand for it,"

Weedon said, smiling at her affectionately.

"No, I didn't mean thieves. I meant men hurt in the war, who have active minds which can't be happy doing some little clerk's job with one hand just to feed themselves. People's *minds* have to be happy before they can go straight and be useful."

She was moving toward the door, when Allenby said:

"Don't forget your pendant, Mrs. Duyker."

She picked it up and fastened it about her neck, then tossed the imitation on the desk.

"I'll never be so fond of it again! I'll always think of that poor, maimed harlequin getting killed over it. Just a bit of green rock with a silly, high price tagged on to it!"

When the two of them were alone, Joan asked:

"Did you always know who I was? Did you think my friendship with Hughie and my coming to America were steps toward the emerald? And, if you thought so, why did you love me?"

"Three questions with long answers." He smiled at her. "No; over in France I didn't know who you were, though I noticed your likeness to Coralyn at once. I knew she had a sister, but it seemed absurd to connect Genelle with Joan Parker. But your hands, your poise, your trained sense of balance, added to the likeness—they seemed to need explanation. Then, after the war, in London, when they put me into this game, I read up on the history of The Noose. I learned of the theft at Count Gorski's ball—the woman who gave her name as Lady Ballard and who disappeared just before the necklace was missed, and who might have been Coralyn, since the description fitted her so well—and fitted Joan Parker equally well. But it was only after we came down here to-day that I knew.

"I ought to say, like a hero in a play, that because I loved you I had utter faith in you. But that wouldn't be true, dear. You stood at the crossroads. This was my position: Because of my war record and the influence of my old commander, I have been given a second chance. The goal of the secret service, with Egypt as my field, is ahead of me if I prove that I am stable. You see, they still think I stole, before I was an Arab bandit. They set a thief to catch a thief, and some one to spy on me while I did the job. They don't know about my brother; and they never shall from me. If you were a thief, Joan, I'd have to chuck all that. I'd have taken you away with me to some out-of-the-world spot where you couldn't pursue the old career."

"You would have thrown away everything for me? Oh, no! I wouldn't have let you. It would be so wrong."

"Doubtless; wholly wrong. But that is something in me beyond reason. We Allenbys are fanatics when we love. And we are one-woman men."

"You were testing me, when you said, 'We have the emerald,'" she mused. "Oh, I am glad you did not mean that!"

"Even if I hadn't meant to have you for myself, I wouldn't have let you marry Hughie. This life—'so safe,' you called it—wouldn't have been safe for you at all. It is too dull. I've said the war changed nothing. It hasn't taken the love of adventure out of your blood and mine. We are the same; but the paths are new. Life no longer hounds us as foes; she offers us a share in her purpose."

"Jack, if, as you declare, the war did not change the world, the men and women who came through the war, with eyes opened, *shall* change it. Even if they are only a handful, they are strong. For they have seen that nothing has power against the soul."

Neither of them spoke for several

minutes. Joan sat leaning back in her chair with shut eyes, her hands lying in her lap. Presently she felt Allenby's hands close about hers.

"Do you think you'll like Egypt, Joan?"

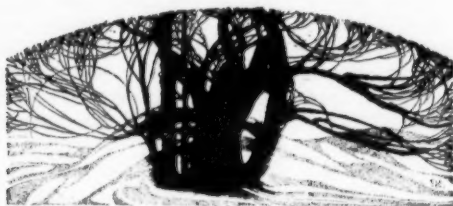
He spoke in the level, nonchalant tone which, as she had learned, indicated a force of emotion he dared not trifle with.

"With you—anywhere," she answered softly.

She lifted her lashes, but her eyes faltered before his—the "smoky red fires" at which she had once jested.

"Why do you look down?" he asked. "Your eyes have looked boldly at peril. Are they going to quail before the oldest war and the invader who carries your fortress? Look at me. You know I love you!"

Her eyes met his, then, kindling in response, veiling nothing of the feeling which, here, for the first time, she let have its way with her. She yielded to the pressure of his arms, enveloping her, drawing her to him. The light of the kin fires, which beacons his conquest and her surrender, went dark only when their lips touched.



IMMORTAL

HE is not dead: the trees he loved are lifting
Their leaves to catch the echo of his song;
And on the lake his boat is idly drifting
Where water lilies blow the summer long!

He is not dead: I hear his joyous singing
In the soft wind that through the forest sighs;
And in the silver light the moon is bringing
I sense the sparkling laughter of his eyes!

He is not dead: how could he now be going
Into the Great Beyond, while 'round me here
I see his face, and in the breezes blowing
I hear his voice, as in that bygone year?

He is not dead: he is but calmly sleeping
In some far field where poppies fill the air
With opiate dreams, the while the stars are keeping
Their steadfast watch above him, resting there.

HELBA BAKER.



The Woman in the Mirror

By F. Berkeley Smith

Author of "A Village of Vagabonds,"

"The Queen of Hearts," etc.

UNCLE AMOS abhorred a miser. Generosity, wholesale generosity, formed the rock foundation of his genial character. His was a nature which fled from things which were depressing or serious. He had his own ideas about life, eccentric and broad-minded though they were, and he lived accordingly.

Jamaica Plain was where he had been born and raised, but he abandoned it long ago for London and Paris—mostly Paris—where he could speak the commonest kind of English, and do as he damned pleased. Nothing worried him. He grew even merrier as he grew older and fatter and balder. The twinkle in his eyes never left him, or his stock of stories either. My uncle Amos was a "game sport." It is rather an unrefined expression, I grant you, but it exactly describes him.

This is a strange tale, and but for my uncle Amos, it would never have happened. Neither would I be alive to tell it, were it not for Rita—Made-moiselle Rita. I never knew her family name and I doubt if she had one.

Love and adventure, like life itself, is purely a game of hazard, that unavoidable torrent of events, the future sweeping us over the rapids of the unexpected, into the whirlpool of the unknown.

As to the unexpected—I awoke in Paris one delicious morning in May with a fortune thrust upon me.

For a long moment I stood in my studio on the threadbare rug which lay between the easel which upheld my bad attempts at painting and the sink where I washed my dishes, staring at a typewritten letter from a firm of lawyers. Its brief contents made my hands tremble. Before noon, I left the lawyers with a check for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in my pocket, payable to me, since every dollar of it was my own. This I made haste to deposit at my bankers. The receiving teller, a pale little man with mournful eyes, handed me a receipt for it without a tremor of surprise. He might at least have congratulated me, for I was more than a millionaire, in francs. All he said was:

"Yes, Mr. Grant, we have been notified." And he coughed asthmatically. Money seemed to bore him. As I had but ten francs and forty centimes in my pocket, a sum wholly inadequate for the occasion, I drew a thousand francs in new bills of the Bank of France, and walked out tingling all over. I was twenty-four, and I knew what I was doing.

In a state of dazed exuberance, I walked on in a dream. And I kept on

walking, on and on, through the Rue de la Paix, and out to the Rue de Rivoli, and across the Place de la Concorde, and up the Champs-Élysées, and into the fair green Bois de Boulogne. The air was sparkling in sunshine and as soft as a caress. All things seemed to welcome my approach. The little birds sang merrily in the fresh green leaves overhead. The lap dogs, highly scented with the expensive perfumes of their mistresses, trotted up to me to make friends. Two even licked my hand in passing. I was young and inexperienced, or I would have known that more than one of these fluffy little canines was trained to wriggle a friendly welcome to the total stranger.

"*Ici, Miquette! Miquette! Veux-tu venir ici!*" with embarrassed authority. "*Il vous gêne, monsieur?*" This in a sort of timid, but seductive apology.

"*Mais pas du tout, madame. Au contraire, j'adore les petits chiens,*" I should have replied. Alas! I was young, I say, and unskilled in these passing opportunities.

I was hungry, and turned into the Pavillon d'Armenonville for luncheon. Alone at a spotless table, I drank a reverential toast in the kind red wine of France, to the memory of my late uncle, Amos Drake. For the third time over my tender chateaubriand, smothered in a brown sauce and mushrooms, I drew out from my pocket a copy of the document the lawyers had given me, and carefully reread it—the codicil to my uncle Amos' will.

To my nephew, Richard Grant. The sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, to do with as he pleases.

Knowing my favorite uncle as I did, I was not surprised that out of a fortune of several millions, he had so liberally remembered me. Moreover, I knew that any serious use on my part of the money he had bestowed on me, would, were he alive, have displeased him. On this my youthful conscience

was clear. At twenty-four, one easily believes that which one wishes to believe.

And, besides, had I the slightest vestige of a doubt, my bottle of Pommard, a "*grand vin*" of '86, dispelled it. It put my mind perfectly at ease. It was one of those honest old bottles, the mere presence of which calls forth respect. Upon one side clung the dust of its long sleep downstairs in a famous cellar, and upon the other the cobwebs drooped in shreds. It had, indeed, patiently lain for years in the dark, waiting for the day when it might pour out consolation and good cheer, like an old friend. No ruby was more superb in color. It kept me company to its very dregs. It gave me a new view of life. It even decided for me that my previous lonely existence, struggling to become a bad painter, was over—well over. It was as if I shook my wretched little past by the hand and bid it goodbye and better luck.

I had the power now to do as I pleased. To me my vast wealth was practically inexhaustible. I would no longer be lonely. All Paris lay before me. The world was mine!

It was amazing how my life changed in less than forty-eight hours. I became a being metamorphosed, a smart bachelor apartment near the Grands Boulevards and an excellent tailor contributing largely to the change.

During my walking hours and long into the night, even to gray dawn, I shook hands with scores of people. I became a familiar figure. Before, my slim, youthful presence made no more impression in Paris than one more sparrow. Now, every one took the deepest interest in my daily welfare. In a word, I was treated with that respectful camaraderie that is meted out to the oldest and most profitable client. True, I rewarded all those who served me, down to the smallest chasseur, with a profusion of tips that might well have

been considered princely. Uncle Amos would have done the same.

Ah! yes, indeed! Those were glorious days, in which beauty often took her seat at my elbow.

How pleasant it was to rise in time for luncheon, not knowing what other charming adventure lay in store for me before the next dawn! A kind word, the glance of fair eyes, the warm pressure of some friendly little hand, wrenched open my heart and my purse as quickly as a barman opens a fresh bottle. I lived in a dream, and I would have continued to live in it, had not my nervous system finally rebelled and handed me in revenge the worst of companions—neurasthenia. Boredom also attacked me in an acute form. I made the dreary round of my pleasures, so thoroughly sick of their charm, that I have been known to dine alone at the Café de Paris, on two boiled eggs, scarcely touching my champagne, to the utter dismay of the maitre d'hôtel. Good old Emile! He took as much interest in my feeble appetite as if he had been a nurse.

"*Pauvre Monsieur Richard!* If monsieur would only listen to me, and permit me to tell monsieur that to dine alone is bad for the morale. Ah! I have an idea. To-morrow night monsieur will see—I shall arrange it. She is altogether charming, and witty in repartee. She is, besides, exquisite. A blonde, monsieur—but a blonde! Ah! *Mon Dieu!* One does not see that often—so fresh, so young, so beautiful! She will cheer monsieur up."

But I wearily waved my hand in protest.

Emile was right. Dining alone was bad for the morale. And yet—had she proved as beautiful as Madame Récamier at eighteen and as witty as Rabelais, I was in no fit condition to be benefited by either. To me the charm of Paris had vanished. I wan-

dered aimlessly up and down the boulevards, and into their side streets, with no destination in view. It was during one of these gloomy promenades that I turned suddenly, in desperation, into an entrance indicated by the first doctor's sign I saw. I ascended to the second floor and stood with some nervous hesitation before an electric button waiting to be pushed, and a doormat lettered "Welcome."

I rang.

"Doctor Bigorre?" I inquired of the maid, who bade me enter. I followed her into a small, dark hall, smelling of iodoform and boiled cabbage and provided with a hatrack.

"It is warm," said I, and hung my light overcoat on the hatrack, retaining my stick, gloves, and hat. Two doors well ajar gave me a passing glimpse of the dining room and salon. Both presented a shabby appearance. I mention these, for they struck me strangely, in contrast with the small private study adjoining, into which the maid now ushered me and left me with the assurance that the doctor would see me in a moment.

This study was impeccably neat. Two splendid leather armchairs were drawn up to a well-ordered mahogany desk. On either side of a broad, mirrored mantle ran a neat series of bookcases, filled with medical volumes with depressing titles. A heavy tapestried curtain had fallen back over the door I had entered. An oppressive silence pervaded the little room, broken only by the faint ticking of a black marble clock on the mirrored mantel.

For all of half an hour I waited, my nerves strung in a tension. Twice I looked at myself in the mirror. No wonder good old Emile had been concerned about me! After that, I contented myself by gazing out of the single window, screened by a pair of spotted lace curtains, at the silent little street below.

Suddenly a door communicating with the dining room opened wide, and Doctor Bigorre burst in. He came through that door like a whirlwind, both hands outstretched in a greeting, which took my breath away. It was dynamic in its sudden intensity.

How long he had been studying me secretly from without, I do not know, but he welcomed me like a long-lost friend. I never have seen embodied in a man—in a round, short, powerfully shouldered, deep-chested little man, as much breezy geniality and energy. The round, smug, clean-shaven face, the short-cropped gray hair, his snapping black eyes, and the quick, vibrant gesture of his fat hands as he forced me into one of the comfortable armchairs beside his desk, obliterated for the moment any attempt at formality.

"Ah!" he cried, seating himself on the edge of his chair, his hands firmly gripping my own. "Ah! my good monsieur, my poor friend! Providence has sent you. This very morning I said to myself, the good God will send some one to me whom I can help, whom I can cure. Eh! *Le voilà!* Here you are! Is it not miraculous? Is it not superb? Do not tell me you do not believe in miracles," he cried aloud, pointing dramatically to the ceiling, "which are meted out to us simple mortals with a charity and justice that is sublime. Ah! you shall see! We shall be good friends, good comrades. There! Look at me squarely in the eyes. There, that is better," He chuckled. "That is excellent—and now the good smile. We must smile through life, my friend. The smile is the oil of life. It lubricates our troubles. See! Your fears have disappeared. We are no longer strangers. You believe in me—you must!" He released my hands and slapped my shoulders genially. Then, in a measured tone he added: "Without your absolute confidence in me, I can do nothing."

"One moment," I gasped feebly. "I'd like to explain—who I am—why I came to you."

As well as I could, I told him of my life in Paris—of my inheritance.

"I thought," said I, "with as much money as that, I could buy happiness—that the world was mine. You know what I mean, doctor. I—I—never thought of my health."

He shook his strong head sadly.

"Poor unfortunate!" he sighed. Then brightening, he resumed. "Ill? Stuff and nonsense! You think you are ill because you think so. Alas! That is the matter with a great many people who are as sound and sane and healthy as you or I. No, my friend, you are not ill. If you were ill, I would tell you so. I am brutally frank, because I worship the truth—because I am sincere. Come! To be more exact, you have neurasthenia somewhat—that is all. Bah! I shall have you out of that in no time. But you must believe in me. You must obey me implicitly, as a soldier obeys his general. Give me this proof of your confidence, and I will give you a new life, a new mentality, a new stock of will power. I intend to bury that neurasthenia of yours forever. And for this I ask you nothing."

I hesitated, at a loss to know what to reply.

He shot out of his chair, and beat his powerful chest with his closed fist.

"Look at me!" he shouted. "Do you know who I am? What I am? I am a man who has consecrated thirty years to helping those who can no longer help themselves—the ill, the weak, and the needy. I care nothing for money. All the money I had, I gave away long ago, gladly, willingly. I am practically a pauper, for I have nothing."

He ceased speaking and stood regarding me with a benign smile, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his black coat.

His whole manner was so forceful,

so dominating, and yet so kindly withal, that I confess he had already won my confidence. In my weak and nervous condition, he seemed a tower of strength to cling to. There was something dominating and hypnotic in his dynamic personality. Besides, I had already taken a great liking to him, and if any one needed a friend, it was I.

And yet, for a long moment I sat before him, gazing at the rug beneath my feet, undecided what to do or say, my mind in a whirl.

"If you stay here in Paris," he resumed suddenly in a measured and subdued tone, "you will be forced sooner or later to go to a sanitarium. A sanitarium is an expensive jail, where they lie to you and continue a rest cure as long as the patient can pay. A sanitarium must think of its stockholders as well as its patients. To put you into one would be a crime. What you need is the good country"—his voice rose again—"plenty of fresh air, exercise, long walks. I intend to make you a brand-new human being, resplendent with new vitality."

The dramatic picture he had drawn of the fate that awaited me, terrified me.

"I'll do as you say," I blurted out eagerly, in a voice whose weakness startled me.

"You'll put yourself entirely in my hands? You'll obey me implicitly?" he was quick to question.

"Yes," said I implicitly.

"Bravo!" he cried, and strode over to the window. Here he stood silent, his back squarely turned to me, his hands clasped behind him.

My eyes again reverted to the pattern of the rug.

Finally I raised my head. I was sitting directly opposite the big mirror over the mantel. As I looked up and into the glass, a door back of my chair half opened.

Framed in the space, every detail of

her pretty face and delicate, graceful figure clearly reflected in the mirror, stood a slender young woman dressed in black. A lithe young woman, sinuous as a young panther, whose rare beauty held my astonished gaze, and whose dark eyes, shaded by the brim of a chic traveling toque with a gray feather, were searching mine with a look of silent desperation. Convinced that our eyes had met, she smiled.

I saw for an instant her parted lips, the gleam of her pearly teeth; then her small, fair, white hand pointed to the door I had entered, leading into the hall. The smile subsided, her pretty lips closed. She stood motionless, and again her dark eyes met mine. Instinct made me nod to her and return her smile, although I was at a loss to know what it all meant. Instantly her whole expression changed to one of intense relief. Her lithe body swayed slightly; she took a step forward, covering her eyes with her right hand. With the left, she closed the door as noiselessly as she had opened it.

It had all happened in a few brief moments, so rapidly that Doctor Bigorre, still standing in silence at the window, his back still turned to me, had evidently been totally unconscious of her presence.

Like a fool, I felt forced to confess to him I had seen her. This impulse was on the spur of the moment, strengthened by the fact that the sudden apparition first worried me, and then the thought came to me that she might be a patient who was in immediate need of him.

"Some one is waiting for you," said I, breaking the silence.

He turned sharply as I spoke, and faced me, smiling.

"No one is waiting for me," said he. "Illusion, my dear fellow—your nerves. Not an uncommon symptom." And then, with cheerful vigor, his black eyes dancing with good humor, he con-

tinued: "Come along—out of this—at once." And before I could put in a word, "Come, you must obey me. I have an idea. It occurred to me a moment ago. Listen, my friend. I have thought out the entire solution of your case. Ah! It is a splendid idea! Tomorrow we shall be en route for Bordeaux. I have an old friend near there, an excellent old curé, the Abbé Grégoire. He lives not far from Bordeaux at a little hamlet called Zette—a primitive place, buried far back in a beautiful country.

"His hospitality, the good air—ah! that is the medicine you need; and I intend to give it to you. A month of that good country life and you will be a brand-new man. En route!" he cried, rushing out into the hall, and returning with my overcoat. "En route," he chuckled, hustling me into my overcoat.

He flung open a drawer of his desk, and drew out a handful of cigars and four packages of cigarettes. These he stuffed generously into my pockets. An instant later, I was leaping with him down the stairs to the street. Here he was quick to hail a passing taxi.

"After you," he insisted, forcing me inside.

"To the Café de Paris," he said to the chauffeur, to my surprise, "and quick, we are as hungry as wolves."

By the end of the luncheon at the Café de Paris, I no longer doubted either the friendship or the good sense of Doctor Bigorre. I would have followed him with entire confidence anywhere he suggested, and was already eager to be en route to his friend, the curé of Zette. I was still in this enthusiastic frame of mind, on the express with him the next morning bound for Bordeaux. En route, an hour later, I left Bigorre apparently dozing in our compartment, the *Matin* spread across his knees. While I stood alone outside in the corridor, contemplating the fresh green

country slipping by, I plunged my hand into my overcoat pocket, hunting for a fresh package of cigarettes, and my fingers touched an envelope. I saw to my surprise that it was sealed and marked in pencil "Immediate."

I nervously opened it and read the following note in French, scribbled in pencil.

SIR: I am the unhappy woman you saw in the mirror. For your welfare as well as mine, I implore you to believe in me. I have suffered enough at his hands, not to pity you in your ignorance. It is imperative that we meet. If you will permit me, I will join you at once. We can arrange a rendezvous near Zette. Go with him to the curé's—do not refuse. Go, and take things as you find them there. The man you are with will return to Paris to-night. Do not be surprised. For the present, prove to him your absolute confidence in him. Do as he says, I implore you—but, if you value your life, do as I say. My only chance to deliver this to you is to put it into the pocket of your overcoat, hanging in the hall. Destroy it immediately after reading, for my life depends on his being kept in ignorance of what I am doing. Trust me. I will prove to you my friendship. Address Mademoiselle Rita, Number 468, *poste restante*. Bureau 7, Paris.

In my still nervous and weak condition, this strange letter made an impression on me which it is difficult to describe. I tried my best to reason things out calmly. A moment before I could have sworn to the good will and sincerity of Bigorre. Now I feared to meet him. Suddenly I had an impulsive desire to return to my seat, to talk to him, to try and prove to myself that my fears were groundless. I tore the letter to bits, and threw them out of the car window, as she had wished. Every word, however, was photographed in my mind. I could have repeated the letter word for word. Its warning rang in my ears. They tell you never to believe in what women say, but I have always believed in what women say. When a woman is really desperate, she tells the truth.

Half an hour passed. At the end of it, I firmly made up my mind to confess nothing about the letter to Bigorre, and regarded the woman who had been brave enough to write it in the light of a true friend. I longed to see her. Her words "if you will permit me" might have more than one meaning.

My first impulse was to send her money. I had over five thousand francs in bills with me, which I had insisted on drawing at the bank, after the luncheon at the Café de Paris, in spite of the fact that Bigorre had strenuously protested at my taking with me so large a sum to so simple a country place, where he assured me I could spend nothing. I had also my check book.

When I returned to Bigorre, the thought uppermost in my mind was to send her some money, at once, so that there would not be a doubt of her being able or willing to join me as she had promised. I first decided to send her three hundred francs. On my way back to the compartment I thought of uncle Amos' generosity. I decided to send her five hundred. Bigorre started up, evidently out of a sound sleep, as I reentered our compartment and regained my seat opposite him. In an instant, he was wide awake, and, in a sudden gale of good humor, held forth on the good qualities of his old friend, the Abbé Grégoire, the curé of Zette, laying stress upon his generous hospitality, despite his poverty, of how kind he had been to a fellow priest, the Abbé Antoine, who lived with him.

I felt like an ungrateful fool to have doubted Bigorre's sincerity for an instant, and yet that letter kept me worried and wondering. I felt, despite all, strangely drawn toward the woman who had risked all to save me. If Bigorre returned immediately to Paris, leaving me alone, all the better. It would leave me free to hunt up a rural post office, unobserved, and to send her a money order.

Our arrival at Bordeaux passed without further incident. At the station we managed to get a carriage which took us to Zette. It was a long drive, over twenty kilometers, through a rich country of woods, fields, and vineyards. We arrived at Zette by sundown. The place itself was one of complete isolation. Its half-dozen scattered habitations and its primitiveness were of the Middle Ages. Both the small stone church of the Abbé Grégoire and his presbytery, separated from it by a wild garden, were perched high up, upon the very brink of a steep palisade, overlooking a vast panorama of green valley below, through which swirled a turbulent yellow river.

As for the palisade itself, it was honeycombed for miles with caverns, and their connecting underground passages. Many of these, Bigorre informed me, reached for miles beneath the plateau, some having their exits in distant hamlets. Upon our arrival at Zette, the only means of gaining the church and presbytery was by a goat path, treacherously steep and winding up the flank of the palisade through a riot of trees and bushes. This we ascended, Bigorre giving me a strong, helping hand and insisting upon lugging my heavy bag.

It was amid this primitive isolation that I found myself a prisoner to my word to Bigorre, to remain with the Abbé Grégoire and his friend, the Abbé Antoine, a full month, to rinse my eyes of Paris, and compose my nerves.

I was in a strange condition of mind, with two black-frosted priests and a small mongrel watchdog as my sole companions. The extreme poverty of the priests was evident. It showed everywhere in the utter neglect of the place. They were too poor, they told me, to keep a servant. As to the church, it stood abandoned and half in ruins. It dated, they informed me, from the eleventh century. Half of the

presbytery dated from the fourteenth century, and this half was likewise abandoned, the roof having fallen in. The livable half was of a later origin.

I sat down to a frugal dinner with Bigorre and the priests that evening in the twilight of their garden. The table of rough boards was placed against a stone parapet, overlooking the vast panorama below. The dinner consisted of soup, a stew of goat's meat, bread, wine, and a small portion of goat's cheese which I was grateful was not larger.

I tried hard to appear genial under the circumstances, but my heart was heavy and I had an indescribable desire to see Rita. I was all the more convinced of her sincerity, when the very thing happened which she had warned me of. Bigorre returned that very night to Paris. He left immediately after dinner, having retained, unknown to me, the carriage which had brought us to Zette. He explained to me that his departure was imperative, owing to a woman patient of his in Paris who needed his immediate attention. It did not surprise me—nothing surprised me. I seemed to be living in another world, of which I was no part, wondering, above all, how I could stand a whole month of it, and trying to muster up all my courage in my loneliness. We stayed late at table, long, indeed, after Bigorre had left.

My host, the Abbé Grégoire, was a man past fifty, tall, heavily built, with keen gray eyes and thick iron-gray hair. His face was strong and determined, in repose. Nothing, however, could have been more quiet and genial than his manner. His smile was a benediction. When he spoke, his voice was full and low. It expressed a sort of compassionate gentleness. The Abbé Antoine, who sat at my left, was a tall, gaunt, and much younger man. He said little and did most of the serving at the table. I was struck by the

extreme courtesy of both toward me, and their evident deep store of knowledge. Although I had expected it, not a word of their religion passed their lips in my presence. Instead, the Abbé Grégoire plied me with questions about America.

The moon rose, flooding the garden with its light. Later, I helped them wash the dishes by the flickering flame of a tall candle, in a stone-walled pantry of the ancient presbytery, directly back of the Abbé Grégoire's study, a room choked with books.

When we had finished washing the dishes, we walked about the moonlit garden. They presented me to their watchdog, a friendly little mongrel, who lived in a barrel by the strong gates of the garden wall, facing the plateau. These gates were twice as high as a man, and heavily hinged and bolted.

It was nearly midnight when my host showed me to my room and bade me a courteous good night. This room was at the top of a short, winding flight of stone stairs. It was a huge, square bedroom, with a ceiling supported by rough-hewn beams and furnished with an iron bedstead, a wooden washstand, and a broken, cane-seated chair. Beside its ancient fireplace stood a huge wardrobe of solid black oak, and in an opposite corner, a life-sized colored statue of the virgin, upon which the moonlight fell softly.

I blew out my candle and tried to sleep, but in vain. Through my two curtainless, paneless windows, the moonlight streamed in with the chill night air. The watchdog dragged at his chain, an owl hooted dismally from down below in the mass of trees. A feeling of frightful loneliness oppressed me. I thought long of Rita. I determined to send for her on the morrow and this gave me a little courage. There were moments, however, when my situation seemed intolerable, moments when an irresistible longing

came over me to slip out of the window and escape. For I knew that all doors were bolted and locked below, the Abbé Grégoire having taken the keys.

Finally, from sheer exhaustion, I fell asleep. When I awoke, it was gray dawn. My eyes reverted to the figure of the virgin. She stood regarding me in her soft white-and-blue robe, with a look of infinite sweetness. Presently a peasant went clacking by in his sabots, passing along the road skirting the high stone wall of the garden. Morning paled. The sun rose, revealing the dust and shabbiness of my room.

An hour later, over a breakfast of white wine and the remainder of the goat stew, I learned from my host, the Abbé Grégoire, that his friend, the younger priest, the Abbé Antoine, had remained with him a year as his guest.

The Abbé Antoine, like myself, he said, had been in ill health, and he was occupied in writing a history of the saints. Beyond this I could learn nothing. Again we washed the dishes. This done, I followed the Abbé Grégoire out of the garden gates to see the church which he wished to show me. He explained to me, as we entered, that in spite of its ruined state, he had upon rare occasions held mass within it.

"In dry weather," he added, pointing sadly to its roof, half of which had fallen in. Presently he led me down into the ancient crypt, by way of winding stone stairs. As we stood in the vaulted chamber below, he stopped and turned to me, holding the flame of the long tallow taper he carried close to my face, and said with a certain benevolent gentleness:

"You must have been in great trouble, my dear friend, to have chosen my poor abode as a refuge—you, who are so used to luxury and comfort! You may tell me all," he continued earnestly, "I am a priest. You have nothing to fear in confessing to me anything."

He laid his free hand tenderly on my shoulder, his gray eyes searching mine.

"My nerves went wrong," I tried to explain.

He looked at me curiously, insistently.

"I have played the fool," I declared frankly.

"Ah!" he smiled. "That does not surprise me. You are young. We have all been fools in our lives."

He leaned nearer, close to the taper's flame. Then suddenly he half said, half whispered in my ear:

"You have not stolen? You have not—killed?"

Stolen! Killed! I started as if he had struck me, and caught my breath.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed aloud. "You don't believe *that* of me, do you?"

He seemed relieved.

"A love affair, then?" he ventured, after a moment's silence. "Ah! my son, they are often enough to kill a man—those little affairs of the heart, that are always big!"

"I have been amusing myself," said I.

He did not reply. Without a word he led me back up the damp, winding stairs, his long black soutane swaying about his strong heels. I saw now the strength of his back, of his powerful arms, the muscles showing plainly through his thin and threadbare soutane. As his hand touched the low door which opened into the church, he stopped and, turning to me, said in a quiet voice, measuring each word:

"There is nothing in amusement, pleasure—hollow pleasure—regret, remorse, retribution. The greatest pleasure in life is to forget oneself and help others. Live modestly, honestly. Love others. Love is a holy word."

We crossed the stone floor of the ruined church and went out by the door we had entered, into the warm sunlight. A dozen yards farther on along the path which led back to the presbytery,

he stopped, and again laid his hand in a kindly way on my shoulder.

"Permit me to take my leave of you," he said so gently that he seemed to be giving me his blessing. "We shall meet again at luncheon. I am rushed this morning. I am not rich, like you—I am poor. I must work. There is the wood to chop, the wine to bottle. I have promised also to see the Mère Dubois who has lost her cow. She is in great distress, poor woman! And so, my dear Monsieur Grant, I leave you to your cigarette, to your leisure, to the charm of this glorious sunshine. Some day you will love Zette, as I do. You will want to return to it. Remember, you will always be welcomed like a brother among us."

With this, he left me, and I turned down the path leading back of the church, thinking over his words. He had touched my heart.

Suddenly I looked up. A lady, closely veiled, was walking rapidly toward me. I drew aside to let her pass. The next instant she lifted her veil and stood still, her dark eyes gazing into mine, a quiet smile creeping into the corners of her lips. For a moment I was so dumfounded, I could not speak.

"Rita!" I gasped at length. "Oh, Rita! Ah! how I have longed to see you!"

An irresistible impulse overcame me. I rushed toward her with open arms.

"Hush! Calm yourself," she whispered tenderly. "You call me by my first name. It does not matter. A woman like myself cannot always expect to be addressed as madame." And then, before I could speak, she added rapidly in a low voice: "I came third class, on the same train as Bigorre and yourself. It was the only way." She seized my hand. "Come quick," she pleaded. "We cannot be seen standing here, and we have no time to lose. Quick, follow me! I have so much to say, so much to ex-

plain! When I show you *all*, you will believe me."

She drew me quickly out of the path and into an overgrown abandoned goat trail, well hidden from the path by a triangle of briars, to the edge of a wild ravine, craterlike in form—a sort of giant pit up from whose depths grew a riot of trees and briars matted with ivy. This we descended by a narrow path, so steep that I had to hang on to the branches to follow her, for she descended swiftly, as if from long habit, her lithe body moving with the ease of a gypsy's, her trim feet sure of their foothold.

Now and then, as I followed her as best I could, grabbing the branches to steady myself, she glanced back at me encouragingly out of the depths of her dark, glorious eyes. I noticed, too, that her skin was olive, her hair a glossy black, her features delicate, her hands exquisite. She was adorable.

At the bottom of the ravine, she led me swiftly through a growth of poplars to the opposite side of the crater. Here we suddenly came to the mouth of a cavern, into which she rapidly led me. As we entered, the darkness was almost total. Gradually my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom. I could see dimly now the rock-hewn ceiling, the oozing walls, the ground, sodden with stagnant pools of water, around whose muddy edges we picked our way. Presently she led me sharply to the left and, stooping, I followed her through a narrow passage, half choked with fallen earth.

At the end of this she stopped, lighted an electric pocket lamp, gave it to me to hold, and drew out from her purse a small, flat key. Two yards farther on brought us to a stout dark door with a heavy padlock. This she unlocked, opening the door halfway on its hinges, and drew me into a square, vaulted chamber. At its farther end we found another door like the first.

This she unlocked with another key. To my surprise she put out the electric lamp. The darkness was total. The door grated against the earth as she opened it.

"Bend down," she whispered, and, grasping my hand, drew me across its threshold.

We stood close together, so close that I felt her warm breath and the faint touch of her hair against my cheek. She seized my hands in a grip of steel. I tried vainly to free them, to seize her in my arms. Suddenly she released my hands, her arms went about my neck, her lips close to mine. I felt weak and giddy.

"I swear to you upon the head of my mother," she declared brokenly, her whole body trembling violently, "that I did not bring you here to make love to you—but to save you, to save myself! I have but to turn on the light to show you *all*!" she whispered tensely. "Then you will believe me. If you knew," she sobbed, "how I have suffered—how I have lied for them— Ah! *Mou dieu!* I have enough of this life—this constant daily dread—this constant fear! I want to go away—far away, where they will never find me! There, there!" she cried before I could speak, flashing up the pocket lamp. "Look! What more proof do you want!"

The light scurried over the rock-hewn walls and ceiling of a cavern twice as large as the one we had passed through. In its center stood a long dark table. One end was littered with piles of thin papers. On the farther end stood crowded together, a mass of chemical bottles. In the middle stood two engraver's presses. She picked up a handful of the papers and held them under the rays of the lamp—a handful of twenty-franc notes of the Bank of France!

"Look," she whispered, turning them over.

They were blank on the reverse side.

"Rita!" I cried. "What does all this mean?" And yet I had sense enough to know clearly what it all meant. The facts were undeniable. Even the penalty for it was clearly printed upon the bank notes—imprisonment for life.

"It means," she said, "that neither of the men you know as the Abbé Grégoire and the Abbé Antoine will ever be poor, as long as they can continue to make these—and they have Bigorre and myself to pass them—against my will—do you understand?"

"You!" I gasped.

"I tell you I am innocent!" she whispered. "What I have done they forced me to do. Ah! You cannot understand all that. You do not know what I have gone through, what I have suffered. How they have watched me—held me as their slave! When you love some one, my little one, when you know his life, his liberty depends on submitting to the will of others— No—no—you cannot understand all that!" And before I could interrupt she went on, "Listen, my little one. Bigorre brought you here because they are in need of real money—a large sum, do you understand? Bigorre, that charlatan, that beast, knew you had it!" She spoke rapidly, her dark eyes dilated, her breath coming in short gasps. "It was to save you—to save myself—that I brought you here. Only you now can help me. They decided to threaten three hundred thousand francs out of you. That is the whole truth, and they would not have hesitated to kill you to get it."

Three hundred thousand francs! The sum brought me to my senses.

"How did Bigorre know I had any money?" I exclaimed. "That—that I was rich?"

"You forget," she replied, "that you told him of your inheritance—of your uncle's generosity. I heard every word that passed between you in his private office, as I stood back of the door lis-

tening. When he told you he would bring you here, I knew what it meant. I pitied him. I determined to save you—to save myself. My only way to warn you was to put my note into the pocket of your overcoat, hanging in the hall. Bigorre told me that night of the plan and the sum he had decided upon."

Her small, nervous hands tightened upon mine. For a long moment I stood there, dazed and trembling, unable to utter a word.

"I want to go away," she whispered. "Far away to another country—so far that I shall be forgotten! I want to live honestly. Oh! my little one—help me to do this! Only you can save me now. I shall be grateful to you until death."

"Yes, I'll help you," I said at length. "I'll give you all—all you need—do you understand—gladly. Oh, Rita, how can I ever thank you for what you have done for me?"

She broke down, sobbing.

During the next moments I forgot the danger we stood in of intrusion, conscious only of the warmth of her arms about me, of her gratitude, her kisses, the hot tears which met my lips. I was trembling from head to foot.

"But if I help you," said I, after a moment, "will it mean that we shall perhaps never meet again?"

She pressed her hand across my lips.

"Believe me, my little one," she murmured, "it is better that way—that we should never meet again. What good could I ever do you? We should only be unhappy in the end. It is always that way, is it not? A woman like me!" I held her close, begging her to find a way that did not mean our separation, her leaving me forever.

"Hush!" she whispered. "You speak of the impossible. Without the arrest of all here, our lives would not be safe a day. With their arrest, I, you must well understand, must disappear. What I have been to them, I have been against my will; that I swear to you

is the truth. Oh! After what they have made me suffer and live through, I can have no pity for them. Help me to get away—then you can go to the police. It is your duty. Now come," she said. "We have no time to lose. I have arranged everything. Come, en route for Paris."

We retraced our way and regained the warm sunlight without, she taking the lead and relocking the doors.

My returning for my things at the presbytery she insisted was out of the question. As for my money and check book, both were happily safe in my pocket. The heavy bag and its contents did not count. We walked rapidly by the back roads to a neighboring village. Here we found a peasant, at whose farm Rita had spent the night. He took us in his cart, unobserved, to a station not far from Bordeaux, where we caught the express for Paris.

By noon the next day Rita was on her way to a port whose name I decline to reveal. I had given her thirty thousand francs—more than she asked for. I believe uncle Amos would have done the same. She left me, but I knew in my heart that she must go, that our parting was imperative.

When she had gone something remained of her in my heart as a consolation, which had buoyed me up over our parting and now filled me with joy; for it was understood between us that we were to meet again—and soon; that before many weeks I would be on my way to join her. Ah! the blind optimism of youth! I thought of her, of my duty toward the law. I also thought of good old Emile. The fact is, I was in need of his advice, distraction, and a good dinner.

From two o'clock until five I was closeted with the Paris police at headquarters. I told them this entire story from beginning to end, on their word of honor that they would not trouble Rita, whom they agreed with me had

been a slave in the hands of the gang. The arrest at Zette of the so-called "Abbé Grégoire" and the pseudo "Abbé Antoine" was a question of less than forty-eight hours. Both proved to be old offenders, long wanted.

Bigorre, alias Van Dort, they arrested as he was entering his office a little before nine that night. He made no resistance. He had been frantically searching for Rita, and must have known that she betrayed him.

Had you chanced to enter the Café de Paris that night you would have seen me dining there—but not alone. Mademoiselle, whose repartee was guaranteed by Emile, was beside me. You might have noticed, too, that the smug

face of Emile wore a smile of complete satisfaction, as he refilled himself our glasses to the brim with the best of Vouvray of '93—a golden wine, sparkling like the wit of mademoiselle, golden as her fair hair, lively as the flash in her deep violet eyes, which contrasted so charmingly with her décolleté gown, with the pink freshness of her white arms, with her lovely neck, upon which rose and fell innocently a string of the purest pearls.

I had had enough of rest cures.

"This is the life!" I confided to Emile, after a peach *au feu éternel* and a green chartreuse.

To which Emile replied with a smile: "*N'est-ce pas, monsieur?*"



CHELSEA BELLS

WHEN Chelsea bells are chiming
I am content to stay
With homely lives and homely loves
Forever and a day.

But from the gray wharves lifting,
Tall masts are luring me
To fly with them, to ply with them,
To lands beyond the sea.

Between the two I'm halting,
For should I put to sea,
The longing for the chiming bells
Would tear the heart of me.

And though I bide in Chelsea
I'll hear forevermore
The sound of mild waves washing
Upon a far-off shore.

HARRY LEE.



The Fringes of Fame



By Solita Solano

Author of "Oil and Water,"

"The Prior Claim," etc.

HORACE BOK read his telegram and, turned pale.

Still in pajamas—pale lavender silk—he left his room and walked down the hall. Pausing before the door of Madame Aimée Fontini, the opera singer, he listened intently. Yes, she was awake. He heard her saying, "*Et de l'eau bien chaude*" to her maid. He drew a deep breath and took courage.

"What ees eet?" came in response to his knock.

Good! Her voice was amiable. He would venture to go in.

"Good morning, my dear. How do you feel after your great triumph last evening?"

"Elise! My cup." The maid took it from Fontini's hand.

"Now, 'O-r-race." She held out her perfumed hand languidly. Her husband bent and kissed it dutifully and without pleasure. Then he stepped back and regarded the singer as she lay, fat and inert, among her laces. Good humor shone in her eyes.

"*A la fin*, they are beginning to appreciate an *artiste!*" she declared, indicating a heap of newspapers by her side. "Thees creetic, he say the best Aida he have seen in twenty year. 'O-r-race, come read again, *hein?* I like to hear what that nice man say."

"Yes, my dear," assented Horace nervously. His eyes dropped to the telegram in his hand. Fontini saw the yellow paper.

"Something for me? An offer, perhaps, for another concert tour?" she asked indifferently. "Tell them I have arranged already. I go next week."

"No, my dear, this isn't for you—not exactly for you. But you know everything for me is also for you." And Horace attempted to laugh fondly. "It is—I mean, I wondered—I thought perhaps you might——"

"You thought—I might—oh, la, la! Say it queek! Don' be so slow like a—like a—*tortue!*"

"Snail, madame," offered the maid.

"*Tais-toi.* What I care what eet ees! 'O-r-race, do not make me a r-r-rage! What you want to say, *hein?*"

"Dear, I have a telegram from an old friend, a very old f——"

"Who?"

"Jim Totten. You don't know him, dearest. He lives in Denver. We made our money at the same time fifteen years ago. He wasn't in mining like me, dear. He liked the cattle business."

"*Mon dieu!* What I care how to make money! You bore me, 'O-r-race. Come, read me the noteeees."

"Dear, will you listen just a minute? Will you, please?" Horace removed a lavender handkerchief from the pocket of his pajamas and mopped his brow.

"My friend is coming to New York for the first time in his life. Well, dear, he seems to take it for granted that he will stay with me—I mean, us, dear. I would have telegraphed him that it was impossible, but now I can't, because he's already on his way. This was sent after he left Chicago, in fact. Now I don't know what to do. I know you would never allow me to have him here!" His distress made his round face look like a stupid baby's.

Fontini sat up suddenly and looked indignant.

"And why not? Ees not thees your house, 'O-r-race, as well as mine? Of course your friend shall stop here with you!" She gave him a little nod. "There! What you theenk of that, *hein?*"

Horace could scarcely believe his luck. The notices must be unusually good to-day.

"Thank you, thank you!" he cried, and kissed her hand again.

"Now the papers, *mon ami*."

Horace began to read the notices after his usual tactful manner, dwelling at length on the favorable paragraphs and skipping entirely any criticism which might upset his wife. But his mind was not on his task for once. It was dallying on the visit of his friend and the great personal triumph which he, Horace Bok, was about to achieve. It would be a veritable tour de force. Even now he was picturing his supreme moment. "Jim, old man, I want you to meet my wife, the famous singer, Madame Aimée Fontini." Jim, knowing, of course, all about this great woman, would be overwhelmed. "Well, how did you ever land *her?*" he would cry, when they were alone. "Well, well, I never thought you had it in you.

Think of that! My old partner married to a great celebrity!"

Horace tried to remember Jim clearly, but discovered that the details had faded away. Well, that was not astonishing. Much had happened since he had left the West fourteen years ago. He chuckled to himself now as he recalled what a crude fellow he had been when he first came to New York. He thought of his ready-made clothes, suspenders, sleeve garters—

And how naïve he had been in those days. He had believed the worst of any woman who smoked cigarettes, and his faith in plush had been as strong as his belief in original sin. Only his love for music had made it impossible for him to effect a metamorphosis.

Music had been the key to a world of which he had but dimly dreamed—a world of culture, amazing personalities, a new viewpoint. And music had led him to Fontini and the beginning of his career as her husband. This to him was fame. He cared not at all that his fame was a pale reflection thrown off from the singer. On the contrary, he was incredibly enamored of the light in which he basked. And if his life on the fringes of fame, with the caprices and temperament of a personage, sometimes tried him to the utmost, it had its compensations and perquisites, too.

Horace was consulted about everything. The manager asked whether Aimée would accept such and such a contract. Would she sing this new song on tour? Would he see if she would receive an interviewer in the morning? Would he find out if she could be persuaded to lend her name to a corset, cold cream, pearl, boudoir cap? The dressmaker insisted on an appointment if the gowns were to be finished by the seventh. Wouldn't this new shade be perfect with her skin? Would Horace give her this photographer's card? He had just made a sensation in London. And so on.

Something different and exhilarating every day through the season in town. Known by every one, sought after and flattered, Horace had come to enjoy the sensations of a royal ambassador or a prime minister.

Horace finished the last criticism.

"Ah, that one, he ees a peeg!" commented Aimée contemptuously. "He know nothing about the voice. What time, Elise?"

"Eleven, madame."

"I tol' Toni I practice at eleven. Maybe he wait now for me. You get dressed queek, 'O-r-race. Why you not dressed? Maybe Toni go away."

"I'll hurry, dear."

Toni Zinga, Aimée's accompanist, was the only person in the Fontini entourage to whom she showed consideration. That was because Toni, too, had the artistic temperament and did not hesitate to display it. No one but Toni could manage the practicing and rehearsals. No one else could tell her she had sung off key or that she must go over that passage again.

Horace, still holding the telegram, ran down the hall.

"I'll have to hurry," he told himself. "Toni will not wait for anybody, and it would be terrible if he should go away." Within his breast he felt a twinge of envy for the man who made Aimée fear that he would not wait.

Presently Horace, glowing, and dressed in a gray suit, gray-topped boots, gray socks and tie, raced down the hall and brought up, panting, in the music room.

"Good morning, Toni," he said briskly. "Madame regrets you have to wait. She will be here in a minute."

Toni, lying on a divan, removed a cigarette from his mouth and grunted. He did not rise or speak. Horace walked fussily about, straightening the music on the piano, pulling a Spanish shawl into place, testing the radiator.

"You think she will find it warm enough?"

"I don't know," replied Toni ungraciously.

"Ah, she was wonderful last night!" exclaimed Horace mechanically. His diurnal praises had become mechanical through years of endless repetition.

"Huh," said Toni.

A swish-swish sounded outside and Aimée came into the room, sweeping down on the men. She wore a black chiffon gown with high collar, long sleeves, and a train. Her black hair was oiled and brushed severely flat. Her eyes were outlined with kohl. Her mouth was painted crimson against a dead-white face.

"*Bon jour, Toni. Je suis fachée de—*" she began.

Toni kissed her hand carelessly and went to the piano. Aimée stood beside him. Horace made a step toward the door, moving cautiously. But it was no use. Fontini's eyes were fixed on him. So he sighed and sat down.

"What I seeng, Toni?"

"Notheeng—in the collaire," said Toni rebukingly.

Horace bowed his head before the expected storm, but Aimée smiled. The influence of the critic's words was still upon her.

"See, Toni," she said. With both hands she seized the collar and pulled violently. It ripped apart and hung loose.

"My dear, that gown cost two thousand dollars!" groaned Horace.

"What I care? *Je m'en fiche.* I wore it two, three time already."

The practice began.

If ever Horace was bored, it was on these occasions of the morning vocalizings at which he was expected to be present to express an opinion. But the only opinion he ever expressed was "Wonderful!" or "Marvelous!" These words he uttered with automatic ec-

stacy, but the singer never tired of this mechanical approval.

Fontini's voice, it was agreed by everybody, was far from "marvelous." She had a few good notes, several that were not bad, and others over which she passed as quickly as possible. Her singing was therefore uneven, and she was a trial to her conductors, who could not always persuade her, however frantic their gestures, to leave one of her good notes and go on with the score. No, it was not for her voice that Aimée had won a following. Rather, it was for her ripe, exotic personality, which attracted curiosity and attention. Except when she gave way to bursts of rather shocking rage, she sent out from her large body waves of magnetism which had more than once brought her half a dozen recalls, no matter how badly she had sung.

Of course, Horace, her husband, had long ago ceased to feel her magnetism. Nor was he, on the other hand, repelled by her fits of anger from circumstance or wounded vanity. He studied her as one watches a weather vane. If the sun was shining, he was contented. If a storm burst, he took to cover. In recent years he had succeeded rather well in avoiding personal attacks. His tact had grown to be an art, and his sensitiveness to her mood was mercurial. He knew at a glance the difference between a fury that shook her to the depths and those spurious outbreaks which she used for effect and which were quite mechanical—the sudden hunching of the shoulders, the shut teeth, the closed eyes, the clenched hands, and the imprecations.

At these times he did not leave her, but remained by her side, murmuring, "That's right, darling. You are absolutely right, my dear. What do you want me to do, dearest?" And when she grew calmer—not before—he would pat her shoulder soothingly and trot off to do her bidding. He never feared

that she would leave him and that he would lose his prestige as the husband of Aimée Fontini. He knew she was saving him for a rainy day, so to speak. Extravagant and improvident, Aimée had never saved a thousand dollars in all her life from the enormous sums she had earned in opera and concert. Horace was her sole investment—to be used when the lean years should arrive.

At first the infatuated man had never missed a performance of opera or concert where Aimée was to sing. Usually he had occupied a box, leaning out to applaud excitedly with split gloves, until his face was red and moist. And, ah, that moment when, having bowed to the rest of the house, she turned to pay him the tribute his devotion had earned! As her eyes had sought his, Horace had felt himself a very god among mortals. With swelling heart he had returned her salute on his feet and tossed bouquets of roses or orchids to the stage.

In the beginning of his fourth year as Aimée's husband, Horace had found himself less thrilled. The novelty had worn off. Some evenings he had even felt annoyance at watching Fontini repeat the well-known gestures, the same simperings, moving away on this note, a step toward the tenor on that phrase. At the risk of discovery, he had begun to leave his place in box or at the back of the house. Slipping out about half-past eight, he would sometimes return barely in time to call for Aimée, explaining that he had had to provide refreshment for some critic, or that some one had wanted an interview about her from her husband's point of view.

It had been in one of these interludes from eight-thirty to eleven that Horace had met Maude Delaney two years ago.

Maude was a model, a "perfect thirty-six," she had assured Horace as she slipped her arm through his. Horace had been charmed by her careless good fellowship and ready laughter.

Walking along to her little apartment in the West Thirties, he had felt himself expanding as he expressed opinions he had half forgotten. Maude had taken his hat and stick and gloves. She had pushed him with giggles into what she called "the comfortable chair." Relaxed and important, Horace had stayed till half-past ten. And that had been the beginning of the affair with Maude for which he did not reproach himself. He argued that if he received no affection or consideration at home, he was not at fault in finding them elsewhere. But, even while he accepted Maude's caresses and her opinion that he was a great man, he secretly despised her mode of living.

Aimée stopped singing. She looked at Horace.

"Marvelous! Splendid!" he murmured, and hastily arose. Going to her side he caught her hand. As he raised it to his lips, he thought, "The fat is getting into her fingers. She should stop sweets and starches." But what he said was:

"My dear, you sing like an angel to-day." And then he glanced at Toni, who was turning over the music, a sneer on his lips. Fontini paid no attention to Horace's compliment, but looked at Toni.

"Maybe I made a leetle flat, *hein*?" she said. "Toni, I theenk we seeng that once more."

The telephone bell trilled. Horace answered.

"It's Louden, dear, for you."

Aimée went to speak to her concert manager.

"'Allo. Oh, that ees kind for you to say. No, I have not seen the newspapers to-day. You know I never read my noteees."

Horace and Toni stole a look at each other. Both dared to smile faintly.

Horace was still sleeping the next morning when Jim Totten arrived.

"Ask him to come in here," he called through the door, and jumped quickly from bed.

A loud knocking at the door commenced.

"Come in, Jim!" said Horace. It would be great to see Jim again! He felt excited for the first time in years. What good times they had had together in those days when neither had had two bits to spare!

The door opened and a man stood on the threshold, a leather bag in his hand. Horace stared. Could this middle-aged man who stood there regarding him with cold, puzzled eyes be his old friend?

Totten took a step forward and removed his large hat.

"Well, Hank!"

"How are you, Jim?" They shook hands.

"Sorry you ain't feelin' well to-day." The ranchman's sharp eyes roved from Horace's face to his pink satin pajamas and dwelled on them suspiciously. His nose, aquiline as a hawk's, seemed to grow even sharper with his disapproval.

"I'm all right, Jim. We don't get up as early here as you do in the West," said Horace. He felt uncomfortable under that steely gaze.

"Well, you're certainly fixed pretty fine here!" remarked Totten in a loud and hearty voice, turning to look about him. He was a tall and powerfully built man. His brown hair curled crisply to his head. A mustache, also brown and crisp, curled so tightly upward that the ends seemed to enter the great orifices of his nose. He wore a sack suit that was too tight, and a stiff white shirt. His shoes were of a light-colored leather, polished until they shone like mirrors.

"Have you had breakfast?" inquired Horace in a low voice, hoping he could, through suggestions, lower the tones of the ranchman. The walls were not thick and the gruff voice might easily

penetrate to the ears of the sleeping Fontini.

"Say, Hank, don't you know it's nearly nine o'clock?" demanded Totten. "I had breakfast two hours ago." He put down his bag and regarded with disfavor a large chair upholstered in pale-blue satin. Then he sat down on it gingerly and thrust a cigar into his mouth.

"Your wife's room?" he asked.

"No—mine," replied Horace nervously. What if Jim should light that atrocious and forbidden cigar and its fumes should filter into the hallway? He shuddered slightly.

"Huh!" commented Totten. "Where is she, Hank? Gettin' your breakfast?"

"My God, no!" cried Horace. Beads of perspiration began to ooze out on his forehead.

"My wife is a great singer, Jim," he began. "She is never disturbed until eleven o'clock. She sings in opera, you know. She's a famous woman, Jim. Didn't you know?"

"I knew you'd married a theayter lady," said Totten. "Of course, we boys who were your friends out in Denver haven't talked much about it—you might have known you could depend on me for that, Hank. Nobody could say anything while I was around. I always stick to my friends, Hank."

A tap at the door and Fontini's maid came in with a tray.

"I see monsieur is awake with a friend so I bring the *déjeuner*," she explained.

"Thank you," said Horace absently. His whole being was concerned with a prayer that Jim would not apply a match to that cigar.

"She French?" asked Totten, jerking his thumb in the direction of the departing maid.

"Yes. Won't you have some coffee?"

"No. Say, Hank, when you finish your refreshment, jump into your

clothes and let's go look at them tall buildings they talk about."

Horace choked on his toast.

"Old man, I'm awfully sorry, but I can't go out to-day," he said. "You know I'd like to, but there's madame's practice hour, and her proofs are coming from Lente's at twelve, and the concert manager has to see us at two. You know I manage almost everything for her—she trusts me in a great many things. Now go out and have a great old time sightseeing, and get back by five, because there'll be an early dinner to-night. And then"—Horace paused and pointed his coffee spoon at Totten impressively—"then I'm going to take you—to—hear—her—sing!"

"Just as you say, partner," said Totten. He got to his feet and shifted his cigar. One hand went into his coat pocket and brought forth a box of matches.

"Come along and see your room!" cried Horace, seizing him by the arm. "Don't stop to smoke now, old man. You'll be out in the air in a few minutes." He threw open the door.

"Quietly now, Jim. It's just a step away," he whispered.

The maid came down the hall.

"Monsieur," she breathed, "madame tol' me las' night for you to come at eleven—the eyebrows, you know, monsieur."

"Yes, yes," replied Horace hastily. He hoped Jim had not heard.

They stole down the hall and entered the guest room. Horace closed the door and put down his friend's bag.

"Say, Hank," exclaimed Totten, "are you afraid of your wife?"

"Afraid of my wife?" Horace laughed mirthlessly. "Well, I should say not, Jim. Why she's the most wonderful woman in the world, Jim! She's the greatest singer the Metropolitan ever had under contract. You just wait till you see some of her notices. I'm going to show them all to you."

"Well, a man would think you was scared to death, the way you pussy-foot around the house," declared Totten, beginning to unpack his bag. He shifted his cigar and rattled the box of matches.

"Let me do all this for you, Jim," begged Horace in a panic. "You go out and get the benefit of the daylight. You can't see so much in the late afternoon as you can if you go now. Go and see everything, Jim. I'm only sorry I can't go with you. Be back for five o'clock dinner."

And Horace pushed Totten into the hall.

The ranchman paused a moment and regarded the worried countenance of his friend.

"I'm certainly glad I don't live in Noo York!" he declared, shaking his head. "It's played hell with you, Hank. You ain't the same man at all."

Horace gently closed the door upon his friend and sat down to recover himself. He was beginning to regret Fontini's amiability in allowing him to invite Totten to stay with them. As he bathed and dressed, he wondered how a man could change so in a few years. Horace did not remember that Jim had been so lacking in—in—well, *culture*. That was the only word that expressed it, after all. What a dreadful question he had asked! "Is she gettin' your breakfast?" Horace shivered at the memory. What if the maid had heard, as she passed in the hall, and should repeat those words to Aimée? He bathed and dressed slowly to pass the time until eleven, when he would go to Fontini, prepared for his weekly duty of plucking out the unnecessary hairs from her eyebrows, so that they might resemble in shape a swallow's wing against the sunset. It was of this task he had hoped Jim would not learn. Somehow he felt the ranchman would not understand.

Toni's appointment for a half hour's

vocalizing was at four o'clock. He and Totten reached the door at the same moment. The maid having admitted them, Toni made for the music room. Totten, embarrassed, said: "Where's Hank, Frenchy?" Presently Aimée swept down the hall, followed by Horace, who carried the score of "Tosca" in his hand. Fontini looked through Totten and went in to the piano. Horace stopped.

"Back again, eh? Did you have a nice day?" he asked politely.

"'O-r-race!" came Aimée's voice. "Breeng my museec!"

"Excuse me," said Horace with a start. "Yes, dear. Coming!" He passed into the music room. "I want you to meet my friend, dearest."

"I meet him at dinner. Now I seeng," replied Fontini. "*Allons, Toni.*"

Horace returned to the ranchman.

"She's pretty busy just now, old man," he said. "Singing to-night, you know. She's a little nervous," he whispered. "You go dress for dinner now."

"Dress for dinner? You bet I will. I guess you thought maybe I forgot to bring the soup and fish!" And Totten threw back his head and began to laugh.

"My God, don't do that!" cried Horace, clutching his arm. "Don't you know that she's practicing?"

The men peered in the door. Aimée, already dressed for dinner in black velvet and diamonds, had thrown aside her scarf. Horace felt Totten's muscles tighten. He saw his friend's eyes fixed on Fontini's vast expanse of neck and bosom.

"So that's your wife, is it, Hank?"

Horace filled his lungs with air.

"Yes, that's my wife," he said, trying to keep pride from his voice.

"Well, well!" commented Totten.

At this moment Fontini, doing vocal acrobatics, ended on one of her good notes. Toni leaped from the piano.

"*C'est beaucoup mieux! C'est superbe!*" he exclaimed.

"Ah, Toni, vous me faites un grand plaisir, cher ami!" cried Aimée.

She sprang at the youth and kissed him enthusiastically on both cheeks. They stood folded in an embrace.

"That's too bad, Hank," said Totten sympathetically. "Anything I can do? I could have told you no good would come of you marryin' a theayter——"

But Horace was not listening. He had rushed into the room, and sought Aimée's hand.

"My dearest, you have surpassed yourself!" he ejaculated. "A perfect note, absolutely pure, wasn't it, Toni? Ah, you will have another great triumph to-night!" He turned to beckon in Totten, but the ranchman had disappeared. Horace, seeking him, found him in his room, nervously pacing the floor.

"Say, Hank, what did you do to him?" he asked eagerly. "I came in here because I don't like to mix in family matters—never did."

"What do you mean?" Horace was bewildered.

"That no-account little fella who was kissin' your wife—what'd you do to him?"

"Jim, you're all wrong about that. You don't understand," said Horace, annoyed. "That's only a custom. It doesn't mean anything serious, Jim."

"Oh," said Totten.

"Now let's see you get into your evening clothes. I'll wager you look handsome when you're all dressed up. We never thought in those old days out in Colorado that we'd ever amount to much; eh, Jim? And yet here we are—you a successful ranchman with a million or two, and me married to one of the most famous women the world has ever seen."

"Huh!" said Totten.

Horace sat down and watched his friend get dressed in tight trousers and a coat through which the muscles of his legs and arms bulged. A ready-

made black tie completed his costume. Then, together they proceeded to the music room and stood waiting at the door for Aimée to turn from her vivacious conversation with Toni.

"Ah, 'O-r-race," she said at last, fixing her husband with her blue-lidded eyes.

"Dear, this is my friend, Jim Totten, who is staying with us," Horace said, palpitating.

Aimée smiled faintly and held out her hand for homage.

Totten stumbled forward awkwardly.

"Pleased to meet you, marm," he said, grasping her fingers in a terrific grip.

"Kiss her hand," whispered Horace in his ear.

"What's that, Hank?" asked Totten, turning.

"Ahem. My dear, you look marvelous this evening!" exclaimed Horace.

"Hank tells me you're a singer, marm," said Totten suddenly.

Aimée surveyed the ranchman coldly. Then she turned her shoulder on him and resumed her conversation with Toni.

"*Mais, il est presque sauvage, cet homme, n'est-ce pas?*" she said rapidly to Toni. "*Et je m'en fiche s'il comprends le français.*"

The maid arrived at this moment to announce dinner. Fontini rose and took Toni's arm without paying any attention to Totten or Horace. Speaking in rapid Parisian French, interlarded with slang, she sauntered into the dining room.

While the soup was being served, Totten did not take his eyes from Fontini. He stared at her powdered face, her hair, oiled flat, her heavy arms and shoulders which, because of their size, seemed to him indecently exposed. Her fingers, stained red at the ends, engaged his attention. She appeared immoderately amused by Toni's re-

marks, and from time to time threw back her head and laughed until the small room reverberated. Horace was silent.

The fish course passed. The roast arrived, and Fontini turned her piercing eyes on Totten, who had not ceased to stare like a yokel at his first circus.

"To-night ees 'Tosca.' I hope you like eet?" she inquired.

"Marm?" said Totten. His eyes searched the table frantically for an explanation of the unknown word.

"The opera to-night," put in Horace nervously.

"I don't know, marm. I ain't seen it," Totten stammered. Then, as if he realized something was expected of him. "You goin' to sing in it, Mrs. Bok?"

Aimée's eyes narrowed. Horace flinched as from a blow.

"You must call her Madame Fontini, Jim," Horace said hastily.

"What for?" inquired Totten loudly. "She's your wife, ain't she?"

Horace groaned. Toni grew a little pale.

At this unfortunate moment the butler presented at Fontini's elbow a dish of parsnips. She regarded them a moment bitterly.

"What ees those?" she asked in a venomous voice.

"Parsnips, madame."

"Parsneeps! Parsneeps! *Parsneeps!*" Her tone swelled until it reached one of her good upper notes. "Monsieur!"

Her eyes began to roll upward until only the whites were visible. She seized the dish with both hands and turned toward the butler. He retreated slowly until his back was against the wall.

"*Cochon!* Peeg!" exploded the singer. With good strength and a fair aim she hurled the dish at his head. Then she turned toward her husband.

Horace did not hesitate. He ran for the door. The ranchman followed him without a moment's delay. The two rushed down the hall, grasped their hats, and ran into the street. No word was spoken until they had put several blocks between them and the house. Then they stopped and leaned sadly against a letter box.

"Hank, it's a lucky thing for you I came when I did," said Totten. "You need me. It's a shame for that heifer to treat you like that. Why, you was a fine fella onct, boy! As fine a fella's I ever seen, and not afraid of man or beast."

Totten's contempt cut Horace to the vitals. He saw himself through the eyes of the ranchman, and the picture seared him. Yes, it was all true. Aimée had made a pitiable thing out of what had once been a fine, brave fellow upon whom many women had been eager to smile.

"You must get away from her," Totten went on. "It isn't too late to save yourself. You ain't old, Hank. Say, don't you know any nice little gal who'd treat you decent and be a reg'lar helpmeet?"

"Well, yes, Jim, I do," admitted Horace, his thoughts leaping to Maude in gratitude. Poor little girl! He had been neglecting her of late. He must try to make it up to her. He pictured a succession of cosy, intimate evenings, when he could read all those books he had been meaning to get at for ten years. And then he thought of the approaching tour. The tour would make any plan impossible for the present. All this must wait until he returned.

"Perhaps you're right, Jim," he began. "But I can't leave my wife just now. You see, her tour begins next week, and I'm afraid she can't go very well without me."

The ranchman looked at Horace and Horace avoided his gaze.

"It's your own funeral, Hank," he

said curtly. "Well, come back with me while I get my things. I'm going to a hotel—where there's peace and quiet."

"All right," assented Horace lamely. They walked back to the corner and waited there until they saw Fontini enter her car and drive off.

"Coast is clear. C'mon!" said Totten. They went in without speaking, and Horace, sitting down by the door, sheepishly watched his friend pack.

"I'll be at that hotel next the deepo if you need me, Hank," he said. They clasped hands and Totten departed.

Horace wandered about the apartment miserably, until at midnight he heard Aimée arrive at the door. He rushed into the hall.

"Well, dear, how was everything?" he inquired brightly.

Fontini, her brow like a thundercloud, gave her cloak to the maid without replying.

"I would have come, dear, as usual, but I feared it would only annoy you to see me," Horace continued, clasping his hands. "I knew you would be all right with James—he's such a careful driver—driver—" He stumbled, and became dumb under Fontini's terrible gaze.

"Where ees that man—your friend?" she asked, speaking through clenched teeth.

"D-d-dear, he's gone to a hotel. I thought you might prefer—"

"Why not keep heem here to geeve some more insults to me, *hein*?" She approached Horace with head thrust forward and the suggestion of a crouch in her posture. Horace backed away.

"Now, dear, please—" he began.

Fontini abandoned her low tone.

"Don't speak!" she suddenly shrieked, using her extreme upper register. "Go out from here to that *homme sauvage* you breeng to my house! Stay with heem! I don't want I see you again, you stupeed peeg!

Never! I hate you! *Salé cochon! Je te deteste!*"

Horace saw her large hands, tipped with pointed red nails, coming at his face. He saw that her lips were drawn away from her teeth. This was no automatic burst of temperament. He recognized it unmistakably as the real thing.

As five finger nails grazed his cheek, he turned and fled out into the night.

"Freedom after years of slavery!" was the way Horace put it to himself and Totten through the following week. He spent the days wandering over the city with the ranchman, renewing old memories and feeling that he was again one of the lords of creation. His evenings were also pleasant—filled with ease and Maude's flattery.

Then, on the day Aimée was to leave on her tour, Horace found himself strangely restless. Before, it had been on tour that he had been happiest. As her husband, he had shared the adulation of the provinces. This incense of the yokelry had never ceased to thrill him as it did her. He never wearied of his vicarious glory. "She is wonderful!" from the lips of the most impossible persons in the world never failed to give a fresh impulse, a new emotion, an added fillip to life.

Well, he was finished with that. He was a man again, no longer an echo, the shadow of a woman. Aimée must get on the best she could without him. He wondered whom she would take in his place. A secretary and another maid, he thought likely. Perhaps he ought to go to the station to see her off. That would be only courteous. Their friends might criticize him if he stayed away.

Horace was at the station by one o'clock and presently found groups of friends collected here and there near the track from which her train was to leave. To them he announced that he was not going this time. Then he saw

Aimée coming in sables and yellow feathers. With little cries the men and women leaped at her, embracing her on both cheeks and calling to her in French and Italian.

It was a scene to draw one's attention. Travelers who were passing paused to watch. Word went about that it was Fontini, the opera singer. Horace stood aside, unnoticed and forlorn. As he was not going on the trip, no one had anything to say to him, whereas before he had always been the center of a crowd who flung instructions at him: "Don't let her forget this," "Be sure she does that," "Send clippings here, photographs there." He saw others basking in the reflection of the halo he had occupied for years.

He began to picture her on tour, surrounded, flattered, the center of gay supper parties in her honor. Some one else would be interceding with her for an interview, the peacemaker at quarrels, explaining to the press her favorite occupation, color, perfumes, songs. And he would be sitting, comfortable and unmolested, to be sure, but bored to madness. He saw the short lock of yellow that had a habit of falling over Maude's temple; the crumpled house dress she wore to get dinner in, and which of late she had not changed when he was coming. He saw her darning stockings, running to empty the pan of water under the ice box—

With a sudden revolt against this life of dullness and inanities, Horace clasped his hands and flung himself on his knees before Aimée. It was her habit to make him seek forgiveness in this attitude.

"Look, dear, I'm on my knees!" he cried. "Please forgive me and take me with you on tour! You know that no one else could be as useful to you as I am. Don't say no, dear. I ask you before all your friends and a great many strangers!"

Aimée, ignoring regally the curious crowd which gathered to gaze at the man who knelt so sincerely, considered a moment, teeth in lip. Then she gave an exaggerated shrug of the shoulders and appealed to her friends.

"Shall I forgive him? *Hein?*"

"Yes, yes!" they called out.

Horace scrambled to his feet. Fontini held out her hand, flashing Horace a charming smile—in fact, the smile she gave him was the one she had until now reserved exclusively for critics. It was indeed a royal pardon. Horace kissed her hand—and this time he meant it.

"And now we are friends, yes?" cooed Aimée, content that several hundred persons were admiring her birds of paradise, her Russian boots of red leather, her furs, and the humility of her husband.

Linked arm in arm, they received the congratulations of their friends. Some one drew their attention to the clock. Fontini gave a little cry of alarm.

"Queeck, 'O-r-race!"

They rushed to the gate, surrounded by their friends. Every one crowded to get a last word with the singer and to call instructions to Horace. "Don't forget she's to give a dinner to the critics in Chicago, old man!" "Mind she takes that new carbolic gargle at the first sign of—" "Be sure she tries out that new song of mine, Mr. Bok!"

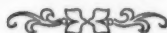
Horace glowed from head to foot. Once again he was part of the center of the universe. Some one thrust three large bouquets of roses into his arms, and the thorns stuck into his chin, his neck, his hands.

Smiling fatuously, he trotted through the gate after Fontini, his eyes following her hat over the bobbing heads of the roses. He had forgotten the existence of Jim Totten and Maude, and was once more "Fontini's husband."



Grafted Fruit

By Jaime Palmer



AS Charles Pratt turned up the steps leading to Gladys Swanson's home, he was alive with the thought that he would see Rena Fuentes. But Gladys was alone. She stood up gracefully and came to him, a tall, slim woman with soft masses of red hair piled high and a rose mouth in a pale face. Her beauty had always appealed to him, and he had envied Phil Swanson his possession, but, since Phil had passed on, she had only had occasional allure for him, for he had become obsessed with the charm of Rena Fuentes.

"I'm glad you're early, nice man," smiled Mrs. Swanson, searching his face with one of her artless smiles. Had she really lost her attraction for him? Determined to put it to the test, she stooped for her fallen scarf, and a premeditated turn swept a wisp of her fragrant hair across his face in passing. His thought full of another woman, it left him untouched. Noting it, a baffled look crossed her face, but she covered it with a half laugh, soft and musical. "But you always cheer me; I'm glad you're here!"

"Thank you, little lady," he responded. "It's nice to be here. Who's coming?" he added with the informality of long acquaintance.

She answered him slowly:

"Why, Rena, of course, as I phoned you. Also Eloise and Pierre." Then, more quickly, "Rena and I are taking him up; he's a dear, isn't he?"

Charles Pratt laughed, showing even, white teeth, almost too white to be pleasing.

"Pierre is all right," he smiled indulgently.

"You prosaic thing! Why, he's a genius!" scolded Gladys. Then she added carelessly, "Do you know he is going to paint Rena? Declares her to be an unusual Latin type. She is beautiful, isn't she?"

The man ran his tongue between his lips and caught the lower one sharply with his white teeth.

"Beautiful!" he repeated the word as if he were inhaling it. "Beautiful!" He paused, then said shortly, "Yes, she is beautiful."

He had thrust his hands nervously into his pockets, and his right foot now tapped the floor—several quick little jerks. The woman watched with a smile, and her heart sank, for she knew to a certainty that what she most dreaded was true—he loved Rena Fuentes.

Complete mistress of herself, she held her smile and chided him gently:

"I believe you are in love with her."

His foot stopped its quick motion, and he gave a short little laugh.

"I believe I am."

Gladys shrugged.

"So you really do care——" She stopped; the doorbell had sounded, interrupting her. The sentence remained unfinished, and she added lightly, "That may be Rena now. Yes,

it's her voice—pardon me for a moment."

At the sound of the low, clear voice in the foyer, greeting Gladys Swanson, Pratt closed his mouth in the same grim manner he affected before addressing a board of directors, when some momentous decision was at stake. He must win! What was it Gladys had said, "So you really care——" Care! When every nerve in him was taut, as he waited for her to enter! In all the forty years of his very full life, he had never been conscious of any woman as he was conscious of Rena Fuentes.

"Ah, Mr. Pratt!" She had entered the room, her hand outstretched in gracious greeting.

Pratt was too much a man of the world to show his emotion, but the steellike glint of his eyes turned misty as he looked at the girl's exquisite face and the slumbering look in her eyes.

"I hoped your father would come," smiled Gladys, coming forward.

"He couldn't; he was so sorry, for I had told him about Pierre, but he was expecting a business associate who has just arrived from Havana. So I came along."

"Then, I may take you home?" urged Pratt. It was an opportunity he had long been seeking.

Gladys scowled becomingly.

"Rena, don't answer him; he's unpardonably rude; just come, and is talking of leaving!" She pretended indignation.

The bell sounded again, and, with an exclamation about Pierre and Eloise, she went to meet them.

Left alone, Pratt turned to Rena and let his glance rest on her lips, her hair, and the sweetness of her.

"I came to-night principally to see you," he said, half inarticulately.

"You are very good," Rena smiled with impersonal formality.

Her coolness warmed him, and set his jaw determinedly.

"Miss Fuentes, are you going to give me a fair chance?"

There was no mistaking his tone, and under his unwavering, admiring eyes, she moved restlessly. She had felt his declaration coming, but had not expected it so abruptly. It found her unprepared. She did not dislike him, was not sure she loved him, but, subtly flattered, unable to resist altogether, she swayed to the admiration in his eyes, the obvious attraction she had for him. It seemed quite extraordinary that she should have won the love of the great financier.

A prominent figure in social and financial circles, Charles Pratt had seized upon the war as his great opportunity to come to the fore, and had achieved for himself an unquestioned position as an authority on financial matters. His opinion was voiced frequently and quoted repeatedly. He could not be dismissed lightly.

The girl threw him a fleeting glance. He was a striking-looking man, with his forceful jaw, straight, keen nose, and dominating eyes. But she could not find words to answer him, and, in his eagerness, he leaned forward in an effort to stir her.

"Miss Fuentes—Rena!" He tried to catch her gaze, but straightened, as the voice of Eloise was heard in the corridor, asking Gladys where they were.

"Tra-la!" she cried suddenly, from the doorway, holding her entrance for a moment, then rushing forward in a little run. Devoted to Rena, she gave her arm an ecstatic squeeze. "*Chérie!*" she cried. "You should see our new studio! And you, too, Mr. Pratt. I have your picture—the one Jacques painted of you—it is there, monsieur, looking down so stern at us. *Mon Dieu*, I tremble——" She drawled the last word with a curious little gurgle.

Standing next to Pratt, she looked a diminutive doll who had suddenly discovered it could talk—and did.

Pratt laughed.

"So you have it up? It's a fine piece of work, I suppose, but I can't say I like it. Glad you took it off my hands!"

"We must see that picture, Rena," observed Gladys. "I've heard so much about it. When may we see it, Eloise?"

Eloise clapped her hands.

"Come to-morrow, at three—why not? I shall have English tea, which I dislike, but some very special little cakes; *non*, Pierre?"

Pierre returned his wife's smile, twirling the ends of his very pointed mustache. Greeting them all, he had seated himself and, without reserve, fixed his gaze on Rena Fuentes.

In Paris, he had achieved a certain distinction for the unusual, and Rena's face, with its appealing subtlety, had, from the first moment, given him a desire to reach out for brush and palette. He had never hoped to catch that illusive expression. Who could? But he was obsessed with the thought that he must try. What a picture it would be! The subtle stillness of her cool, sweet face suggested the slumbering glow of a woman who has not yet come into her own.

At that moment, an expression of comradeship swept from her eyes to his. She admired the creative genius of the Frenchman, his modesty and charm.

"So you like your new studio?" she smiled.

"It is heavenly!" rapturously exclaimed Eloise, answering for him. "Such a clutter, but what fun, *chérie*! Pierre is planning—" She rambled on to the enjoyment of them all, telling them what Pierre was planning. Her pert, yet gracious, manner and unexpected remarks made her the spirited center of any group she entered.

The rest of the evening passed quickly, with quick flashes of wit from

Pierre, caustic comments, tinged with brilliance, from Gladys, and saucy nothings from Eloise, studded with interesting comments from Pratt.

Rena was unusually silent.

Charles Pratt took them all home in his machine. He left the French couple at their studio, and, as the car moved on, he turned eagerly to Rena Fuentes.

II.

"At last I have you to myself!" he declared warmly. "I've been wanting just this for an age, and I'm not good at waiting."

He had been at his best all evening, and, in the semidarkness of the car, his face looked finely chiseled and distinguished. His hand reached out and covered hers.

"Rena, I care very much for you, and you—you must care—my dear!" His voice shook and the hand which touched hers trembled.

There was no question in her mind but that he loved her. It moved her.

"I—I don't know. Perhaps—" Her answer came haltingly, full of bewilderment.

But it was all he needed. His humility was lost in his eagerness to sense her nearness, and he pressed his lips to hers.

His caress left her untouched, slightly chilled, and her eyes, half frightened, looked into his questioningly.

"Yes; you *must* love me, you *do*! You must marry me, Rena. Say you will!" he urged.

But the girl was not yet sure.

"I don't know," she answered.

Like the strategist that he was, he followed his advantage.

"Don't know? Yes, you do. Think of it! You belong to me!"

His voice was so full of quiet triumph, so assured, that it seemed absurd, almost childish to contradict

him. Besides, she was not sure that she wished to. There was a certain magnetic charm about the man, which drew her, even when it repelled. And yet—did it repel? Was it not, perhaps, her innate shyness? Nor must she forget that her father liked him.

The car stopped and he helped her from it, entering the foyer of her home with her. Much disturbed by his declaration, and uncertain of herself, she did not invite him to stay. He sensed her nervousness and smiled, for he believed he read it rightly.

"I'll drop in to-morrow at Pierre's at three. It'll be a busy day for me, but I'll try to make it. I may have to leave for Chicago to-morrow night—expect a call any minute. Hate to go, too."

"What a shame!" she murmured.

He held her hand.

"Do you mean that? Would you miss me?"

"Perhaps I would—a little," she said with a touch of demureness, which he found delightful and exceedingly provocative.

He took her hand and drew her nearer, but she turned away.

For all her years, she was, emotionally, still a child, he thought. Afraid to lose what he acquired, he wrung her hand and left her with a caressing word, softly spoken.

Eager to be alone, to realize more fully what had come to her, Rena turned to go upstairs, but her father's voice called, as she passed the library.

"Yes, father?" she answered him.

"Come in, my dear. I wish you to meet a business associate of mine."

John Fuentes, tall and thin, with sparse white hair and an aristocratic manner, came forward to meet her, pulling aside the portière with scrupulous politeness, as she passed in.

Ordinarily cool and self-possessed, she stood within the room, her face slightly flushed, an undercurrent of un-

rest in her eyes—an exquisite picture of loveliness, which brought Fuentes' guest to his feet.

"My dear," smiled Fuentes, unaware that dynamic forces were at work, "permit me to present Ramon Lopez, our representative in Havana."

The Spaniard bowed with the lithe grace of the Latin. What a beautiful woman!

"Mr. Lopez is staying with us, Rena. Jackson's been taken ill suddenly with something or other," Fuentes spoke the language of a New Yorker, and in no way suggested the Latin.

Lopez suavely accepted the hospitality, breaking into Spanish adequately to express his thanks. Fuentes answered him in English, a slight frown working into the creases of his forehead, and, pulling out a cigar, he bit off the end of it in characteristic American fashion.

"I never speak Spanish, Lopez—not if I can help it!" he said abruptly. "Neither does Rena. This is an American household."

Rena flushed at his curt tone.

"Father!" she exclaimed. "Please speak for yourself. Señor, I like Spanish and I hope you will let me speak it to you. We'll punish father by excluding him," she ended with a laugh, eager to wipe out the hurt look on Lopez's face.

Fuentes shrugged.

"By all means exclude me!" he exclaimed shortly. "You must be tired, Lopez—we're keeping you up. Let me take you to your rooms."

The man thanked him, but Rena, knowing that he must feel very ill at ease in this American home which had discarded its Latin origin, held out her hand to him.

"Buenas noches, señor," she smiled.

"Good night, madam," he responded with reserve, following Fuentes from the room.

Rena looked after him with appreci-

ation. What a sensitive, noble face he had! She was sorry that her father had been needlessly abrupt with him. Strange, how he had repudiated his own people. Lopez was the first Latin who had entered his house, as far as she could remember, and it was only Jackson's illness which had brought Lopez to his home as his present guest. So entirely had she been surrounded by Americans, that it had scarcely occurred to her to remember at any time that she had been born in Havana and that every drop of blood in her was Latin. She was sorry her father had kept her away from these people. There was something about Ramon Lopez which she found surprisingly sympathetic. Her thoughts were interrupted by the return of her father.

"Have a good time to-night?" he asked, looking at her shrewdly.

Suddenly, she recalled the declaration of Charles Pratt, flushed somewhat, and answered him:

"Yes, rather."

"Sorry I couldn't make it. Tried to, but Lopez came later than I thought, and we got talking seriously. Sorry he has to stay, but we'll have to put up with it for a week or so. Hope it won't bother you too much to have him on your hands somewhat." Without waiting for her answer, he dismissed the subject and lit his cigar, inhaling it in deep breaths. "Pratt there to-night?" he went on, with an assumed carelessness which was pregnant with meaning.

"Yes," Rana answered, trying to make her words sound light. She could not account for her feeling, but she had a decided aversion to making her father confidant at that moment. But Fuentes, who was unusually psychic, notwithstanding his apparent brusqueness, knew perfectly well that she was excluding him, and he smiled knowingly.

"If he is serious in his attentions, Rana, I hope you will consider him," he said decisively.

"I'm afraid he is." She spoke half audibly, but he caught it.

"Afraid? Scarcely the word, my dear!" He frowned. "Don't you like him?"

"Oh, yes," she answered hurriedly, pulling her cape about her.

"Cold? he asked.

She shook her head.

"No, but I'm tired. I think I'll go upstairs, dear."

He did not answer her at once, and she lingered. After a few moments of silence, he said:

"I suppose you realize how fortunate you are in receiving the attentions of a man like Pratt. The woman who marries him will rank with the first families of the country."

Rana smiled.

"I'm not ambitious—that way."

"Perhaps not," he said, scowling, "but I am *for* you! When I came to this country twenty years ago, your mother had just died. You were five years old. I had very little money. Without money, life is hard. I vowed to get it. I did. I have worked to achieve for myself a place in the world—and I have succeeded. I have made myself an American, and my daughter is an American woman. But I shall not be satisfied until my daughter has become the wife of a worthy American man."

His words somehow moved her. It was true that he had done everything to bring about his present high standing, and he had been generous with her. In return, she had given very little. It scarcely seemed fair not to do her part.

"Anxious to lose me, dear?" she asked with a smile.

A look almost tender crossed his face.

"Not lose you, Rana, but——"

"Out with it, father!" she interrupted with a laugh. "You've said it—I'm to help you achieve your ambition."

"Well, yes," he conceded, looking at her candidly.

His frankness brought her quick response.

"Charles Pratt asked me to marry him to-night."

He threw his cigar on the tray and crossed the space between them, taking her hands.

"Well?"

His tenseness communicated itself to her and she answered as he expected.

"I believe I'm going to marry him," she said.

III.

Rena came down next morning to find their guest sitting in front of the fireplace with a frown puckering his forehead. At sight of her, however, a smile appeared. He stood up with a graceful bow, and waited until she had seated herself.

In the morning light he looked older than she had thought him the preceding day. There were fine lines about his eyes, and his black hair was slightly tinged with gray. Determined to make amends for her father's brusqueness, she turned to him with much less of her usual reserve.

"Have you any special plans for to-day, señor? We want to make your stay interesting for you."

"I thank you, I have an appointment at our New York office this morning, but I am not engaged this afternoon—and at your service," he answered easily.

Remembering her appointment at the studio, she told him about Pierre and asked him to accompany her. Ramon acquiesced, expressing in his courtly Spanish way the honor which would be conferred upon him, and Rena, listening to the soft cadence of his voice, with its sympathetic timbre, felt curiously at home with him, and was glad that chance had brought him to their home. But it was not until they

reached Pierre's studio, which was on the fifth floor of an apartment house, that she discovered another bond between them—he could be very young.

The house did not have an elevator, and as they climbed to the top and reached the studio in a state of breathlessness, he laughed boyishly and said with a twinkle:

"*Dios!* Is this heaven?"

"Isn't it fun?" she answered, meeting his joyous mood.

Eloise opened the door.

"*Chérie!*" she cried brightly. "And with some one who looks nice! Pierre! Come, see who is here!"

Pierre, with his winsome smile, ushered them in, and, discovering Ramon's nationality, broke into eager Spanish, which he spoke like a native. Lopez knew Paris, and they were at home at once, and the spirited conversation which followed was an odd mixture of French and Spanish, a word of English now and then, and much laughter.

In the gay atmosphere, with its genial warmth and unrestrained informality, Rena unfolded like a tropic flower in the sunshine. Ramon delighted in the sparkle of her.

"What a woman!" he thought. "She is not all American, for her soul is Latin."

But, as the conversation continued, Pierre became restless. He found Rena's unusual mood very puzzling. He looked from her to Ramon with a question. He spoke of the promised sitting, but she put him off with a laugh. Not yet. She had her father's guest; he was only remaining for a short two weeks.

Pierre shrugged, and the subject, closed for Eloise, had opened the door to Charles Pratt's knock. As soon as greetings were over, he turned to Rena and leaned over her chair with a proprietary air.

"I haven't thought of any one but you, sweetheart," he whispered.

"Hush!" she begged. "If they should hear you—"

"Let them!" he laughed. But she looked so distressed that he wisely refrained from voicing embarrassing phrases, and contented himself by suggesting that he hoped she would soon be leaving—that he must see her alone.

Alone! Remembering his kiss, she was not sure she wanted to see him alone—just yet. She pretended not to hear him, and answered, instead, a question Eloise put to her.

"Have you seen Mr. Pratt's picture, *chérie*? It is here. Look! But, *mon Dieu*, monsieur, did I not say you were so serious! It is our most valued picture."

"I am honored," smiled Pratt, perfunctorily, taking it as a personal compliment. "But, I agree with you, little lady; it is too serious."

Rena, struggling to find a key to the disturbing mood which governed her, turned to the picture with him. It did not look like the Charles Pratt she knew. Extraordinarily good, from the standpoint of features, it nevertheless conveyed a sense of unfamiliarity. Pratt's eyes had a pleasant habit of twinkling when he was in a genial mood, and softened his hard face, giving it a kindly cast. But the picture Jacques had painted was wholly without humor, and the eyes which looked out of the canvas showed a steellike glint which spoke of determination—and a certain ruthlessness.

Was that the man she was going to marry? The question urged itself upon the girl. She remembered what Pierre had once said: "Jacques has a way of depicting souls." Was Charles Pratt's soul so barren? The picture was wholly material. She gave a little shudder and tried to comfort herself by meeting the genial eyes of the man beside her.

"You don't like it?" he asked, his face smilingly pleasant. "Neither do I. I was glad to loan it to Pierre."

Before she could answer, Gladys entered.

"I'm sorry I'm so late!" she cried. "How jolly you all look!" Her appraising glance took in the studio and the newcomer, Ramon Lopez.

He bowed gracefully over her hand when Eloise introduced him.

"Good looking—even distinguished—and what eyes! Wonder who he is!" she thought.

She was soon to find out. Like a mischievous child, who sees an opportunity to escape, Rena had picked up her coat and whispered to Eloise that she must go—there were theater tickets she had arranged to get for her father that night.

Pratt had turned from the picture at Gladys's entrance, and his frown showed that he was disturbed. He had supposed the Spaniard was a friend of Pierre, who was usually attracted to odd characters. But he now saw that he was wrong. Who the devil was he?

He observed the easy manner in which the Latin held out Rena's coat for her, and the gracious way in which she accepted his service, throwing a cordial little glance back at him over her shoulder. He now picked up his stick and hat—he was evidently going out with her. Pratt bit his lower lip and had decided on a move of his own, when Eloise slipped her arm into his.

"Please do not desert us, Mr. Pratt. I have those very special little cakes for you. Mr. Lopez will take care of Rena."

"Mr. Lopez is staying with us, you know," supplemented Rena hurriedly.

Charles Pratt did not know, but he bent his head. He could not make himself ridiculous. He watched her leave with Lopez, forcing a smile to cover his irritation, and permitted Eloise to feed him her very special little cakes.

Gladys watched him without appearing to do so.

"Who is that fascinating man with Rena?" she asked. "His eyes are quite marvelous!"

"Are they not?" agreed Eloise, spinning around. "Pierre, did you notice them?"

"No!" answered Pierre in a somber voice, rolling a cigarette with nervous fingers. "I was too profoundly held by the eyes of Mademoiselle Rena. I must paint quickly."

Disregarding his comment, Eloise answered Gladys' question.

"Mr. Lopez is a business associate of Mr. Fuentes—and is stopping with them."

"How long?" The abrupt question came from Pratt.

"Not long, I believe," smiled Eloise, well aware of Pratt's interest in Rena, and taking an impish delight in seeing him perturbed. Besides, Ramon Lopez was enough like Pierre to have won her sympathies.

Gladys hoped, indeed, that Pratt had cause for jealousy. With such eyes, Ramon Lopez might easily win the heart of a sentimentalist like Rena—and if he did, Charles Pratt might still belong to her.

On the way home with Pratt, she led the subject to Rena, but so adroitly that he did not perceive it.

"Why so cross, old dear?" she asked lightly.

"Who wouldn't be!" he growled. "I became engaged to Rena last night, and to-day she walks off with that confounded Spaniard!"

The woman looked away from him.

"Engaged! Congratulations, dear boy!" she said. "You surely aren't jealous of a man she's known a day? There can be no choice between you and Mr. Lopez, even if it could come to that."

"Of course, I know that," he answered quickly. "But——"

"Oh, nonsense!" she interrupted. "No buts, Charles! You'll marry Rena! Have you forgotten that Fuentes is ambitious?"

Without doubt, she was right. He threw off his petulance and looked at his companion appreciatively.

In her furs, she was rarely beautiful, and, for the moment, he was keenly aware of her radiance—the rose mouth in the pale face, with the tendrils of reddish hair peeping from beneath her little turban. She wasn't Rena, of course, but if it weren't for Rena, well, at least there was that about her—a man could talk to her—didn't have to measure up constantly. She always understood him; made him so comfortable; he'd always thought Phil rather lucky. Extraordinary woman, Gladys! But his thoughts quickly returned to Rena. He must marry her—and quickly!

What was it Gladys had said—that Fuentes was ambitious? Quite true, that!

"I believe I'll speak to Fuentes at once." He spoke the words aloud.

Gladys, knowing that nothing is so deadly as paternal pressure, smiled brightly.

"It might be a good idea. But what a little stupid she would be not to want you! It's too silly, my dear!"

Subtly flattered, he rewarded her with a warm smile.

IV.

Charles Pratt always moved quickly. The very next day, he went to see Fuentes at his office and formally made his declaration for Rena's hand.

It was a proud moment for Fuentes, and his lean hands rubbed together softly as he moistened his lips, to hide his emotion. His deep satisfaction was so evident that Charles Pratt knew to a certainty that he would marry Rena.

After his interview with Fuentes, he dismissed the thought of any other man as too absurd to consider for a moment. He could trust Fuentes to keep Rena for him.

He had promised Fuentes that he would visit them that night, but, unfortunately, the business call, which he had been expecting, came—important papers which required his signature at once by law—and, putting business first, he telephoned Rena the cause of his absence, and took the night train to Chicago. He would be gone for a week.

Rena had told him over the phone that she was sorry he had to go, but, putting down the receiver, she knew that she was glad. Unusually candid in dealing with herself, she resented the sense of relief his going gave her.

Why should she feel like that?

She could hear the voices of her father and Ramon Lopez in the library. She knew that Pratt had spoken to Fuentes, that he had been accepted for her. Her father's unusual affability tonight showed how greatly he was pleased. But, he had, of course, said nothing to Lopez. It was not to be announced until Pratt's return to New York.

Ramon Lopez was amusing Fuentes with an anecdote, and, at its close, his rich, full laugh rang out happily, sending a thrill through her. Pratt had never thrilled her like that. Was that the answer she had been groping to find?

Instead of turning into the library, where the two men sat, she went up to her room, conscious of her burning cheeks, the flutter of her heart. Could it really be so?

She had only known Ramon two days, but, analyzing it, she knew that in that first moment, when he had bowed over her hand, he had won for himself a place in her heart. Her analysis did not go beyond, for the thought in itself was too absorbing to admit of

any other, but that the Latin should have affected her was natural.

He had come at a crucial moment in her life, when a vigorous play had been made upon her emotions. That she had not responded to Pratt—had, in fact, been chilled by his caress—made her reaction to Lopez the more keen. Pratt had held her only through his dominating personality and a certain magnetism which was part of the man's power. It had confused her into the belief that she might love him, but she had failed to do so, because he had, indeed, come to her spiritually barren.

Disturbed by her conflicting emotions, with unerring instinct she had turned to Lopez, for his quiet smile and eloquent eyes showed how readily one might have faith in the fine spiritual quality of the man.

He had become what he was through the training of an unusual mother. Widowed when young, the responsibility of rearing her boy fell to her. She met it bravely. She had been educated in American institutions and, believing that these would help to instill in him the highest standards of living, she had sent him to the States for his schooling.

Above all, she had taught him to revere women and, because his ideals were high and he worshiped the perfection of his mother's graces, he had vowed whimsically that he would marry only the woman who had her splendid democracy, modified, as it was, was by the fine old aristocracy of Spanish lineage.

Women all Latin, he mused, lacked the sparkle which made life the joyous thing it should be; women all American lacked the softness which subdued the sparkle. The perfect woman was the blending of the two—and he knew he had found her when he met Rena Fuentes.

Would she love him? Always alert to emotional possibilities, he had not

failed to note the expression on Pratt's face when he had leaned over the girl in the studio, and its significance had troubled him. But he had not waited all his life to see the woman of his heart taken by another, without a struggle.

Whatever the odds, he determined to win.

V.

They spent the greater part of the week together, and Ramon rejoiced, for it gave him moments to smile his way into her heart. But he could not tell how much he had won, for Rena's joyousness could not be rightly interpreted by him. It was Pierre who knew the truth at once.

Coming across them one afternoon in the art galleries, he knew that he had lost his chance to paint the marvelous eyes of Rena Fuentes, for they no longer held the illusive expression which had drawn him. He knew that she had, at last, learned to love.

Having read Pratt from the very first, Pierre was glad, for it would mean that Rena would marry Lopez, whom he liked. But, when he spoke of it to Eloise she shook her wise little head.

"She would be most unhappy with Pratt, but she may marry him—it is Rena's way."

Eloise was right.

Loving Ramon and living joyously every moment with him, it had not occurred to her that she would not marry Pratt. That she was pledged to him by her father made that fact final. Ramon was an episode, and he would remain a beautiful memory long after he had returned to Havana. In a few days he would be gone, and she would take up her life again as if he had never come into it. There was no decision for her to make. She loved him, but she dared not believe that he loved her.

If his eye brightened when she was near, and his voice softened, she attrib-

uted it to his courtly Spanish way. She did not mean to deceive herself—it was rather that she strove desperately to believe it, so that she would not too surely betray herself.

But, inevitably, she was to know the truth. She had been sitting with Ramon before the fireplace, waiting for Fuentes to come home for dinner. It was twilight, and the embers in the open fireplace alone lit up the room. Unable to resist the magic of the gloaming, Lopez permitted himself the luxury of one personal remark.

"In a few days I shall be on the ocean again, with only the memory of this wonderful week!"

His words came with unexpected tenderness, and the girl thrilled to them. But she did not answer.

Her silence brought from him another thought.

"I do not want to go."

"Please!" she murmured—a protesting whisper which unnerved him and made him come over to her quickly and take her hand. Could he really speak?

"*Porque no?*" he asked in Spanish.

She could not tell him that she was engaged to Pratt—it seemed needlessly cruel and too strikingly unreal even to her. But her silence served again to urge words from him, which expressed his love for her—halting phrases which she wanted to hear, even as she tried to stop them.

"*Chiquita*, I have not dared to believe that you would love me—it could not be possible! But then, I do not know—I do not know. Perhaps because I have loved you so much—you might care—if only a little! I should have spoken first to your father, but the moment—it came so quickly—like that!" He snapped his fingers. "But I shall speak to Señor Fuentes to-night."

"Oh, no; you must not," she said hastily. "Not to-night!"

"Not to-night? Why not?" He looked at her anxiously.

She summoned her courage.

"Charles Pratt is coming to-night," she said bravely. But, sensing the significance of the meaning which might lay behind the simple words, a look of pain crossed his face, leaving it so drawn that she lost courage and added lightly, "Besides, you have that conference you spoke about yesterday."

His face did not clear entirely, but he looked relieved; and, anxious to believe he had misunderstood what her words might have conveyed, he smiled. "True. Then I shall speak to your father to-morrow. May I?"

Mercifully, she did not have to answer, for Fuentes entered the room, making a comment on the dull lights, and a few moments later, dinner was announced.

VI.

Immediately after they had dined, Lopez left for his conference, and Rena turned into the library to await the coming of Pratt. In a few moments, Fuentes joined her there.

He had been so completely elated over the conquest of the financier that his usually keen powers of observation had been somewhat dulled during the week, and he had failed to notice the fact that Ramon Lopez and Rena had been together practically all of the time, and that, possibly, the Latin had fallen in love with her.

But, coming into the library before dinner, and finding them both in the gloaming had awakened him to the obvious—that Lopez had evidently fallen in love with Rena. He could not blame him for that—Rena *was* beautiful! But what a waste of sentiment! Lopez was not worth her serious attention for an instant. But, nevertheless, he must warn Rena. It was needless to have Lopez's infatuation exposed to Pratt.

Entering the library, he found Rena sitting before the fireplace, its glow, playing on her face, giving it exquisite

color. He smiled. Married to Pratt, the world would be hers!

"I'm glad Lopez had to go to that conference to-night," he began. "It's just as well he's not here when Pratt comes later."

"Why?" she asked slowly.

Did her father suspect the truth?

"Because, my dear, Lopez—as you must know—has fallen in love with you. Rather funny—but it might irritate Pratt, and that would never do!"

"Why?" Again the short word, with its wealth of suggestion.

And again Fuentes, certain of his ground, answered jocosely:

"Men in love are cave men, particularly men of Pratt's type—and they resent another man's attention. Pratt's a man of strong feelings—why disturb him?"

Cave men! She thought of Pratt—and it was the face of the man in the picture which came to her, hard, ruthless, cruel!

Unaware that he was blundering, pleased with her apparent acceptance of his views, Fuentes puffed the cigar which was never far from him and continued:

"You'll be happy with Pratt, Rena. When he spoke of you, he showed decided depth of feeling. He loves you very much!"

"Loves *me*?" Rena asked the question with a quick little intake of breath. Somehow, the scales were falling from her eyes, her father's words clearing what she had been groping to find for herself. *Jacques had made no mistake in painting him.*

Fuentes caught the tense tone this time and, putting down his cigar, he looked at her abruptly. Until that moment, he had believed he had her absolutely.

"Do you doubt it?" he asked, frowning, in a voice which defied any answer but the one his first words had suggested.

"It is all a question of what you call love, father," she answered quietly, but her voice was nervous. Love, the sort of thing *she* called love she knew Charles Pratt did not have for her.

Fuentes laughed indulgently.

"Fiddlesticks! You're sure you're in love, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Rena quickly. "But not with Pratt!"

Fuentes gave her a look from which all kindness had vanished. He picked up another cigar and bit off the end savagely.

"So you think it's Lopez?" he asked directly.

Still nervous, but more certain of herself, she answered unhesitatingly:

"Yes, it's Lopez."

"Hm!" He took a deep puff or two, and then said, "Well, that doesn't alter your obligation to Pratt."

Rena, with that quixotic sense of honor which had been inherited from generations of Spanish ancestors, had been thinking that very thing, but the metallic note in her father's eyes aroused the American spirit in her. Was he right? Not loving Pratt, should she marry him? And what of Ramon? Should she not think of him? Marriage to Pratt could not be the way out!

She gave Fuentes a look which hinted at growing strength and, reading it correctly, he lost his sense of masterly direction and floundered.

"You will marry Charles Pratt," he said sharply, in a tone which admitted of no argument.

At the challenge, every trace of nervousness left the girl, and the eyes which met Fuentes were very much like his own. But she spoke softly.

"Father, I'm sorry, but I can't do that."

Twenty years fell from John Fuentes, as the simple words came from her lips. He became Juan Fuentes, the Latin, as completely un-American in

speech and attitude as if he had never lived the intervening years in America.

"I, your father, command you!" he declared autocratically, unconsciously speaking in Spanish.

She looked at him pityingly.

"Father, that's absurd! You've told me repeatedly that I'm an American woman. When Charles Pratt comes, tell him that I don't love him—that it releases me—and that I cannot marry him."

VII.

She had told her father that she was an American woman, but she never felt so wholly Latin as when she turned from him and went upstairs to her room. She did not turn on the light, but welcomed the shielding darkness. Ramon had told her that he loved her—he would tell her again; and—

Released from Pratt, her thoughts, without fetters, soared high and, with the whole of her soul, she reached out to Ramon. Always reserved, the girl marveled at the quick inrush of emotion which now possessed her. She dwelt on her lover's dark eyes, the warm tenderness which had filled them when he had said, "I have loved you so much—you might care—if only a little!"

Care! She had never thought that caring could be like this.

Alone in the darkness, she dreamed her dreams.

Hours later, the thought of her father returned to her. She had hurt him miserably, she knew, in refusing to marry Pratt, for it was to be the consummation of his life's ambition. But that ambition was unworthy of the sacrifice. What had he hoped to achieve but the marrying of her to an American, in order to fulfill his small desire to sever her completely from his race! And how pitifully he had fallen, unconsciously reflecting the spirit of the fathers of his race, when he had commanded her obedience! Grafted fruit—

both of them! But she, at least, was going back to her own. That would hurt him.

How very lonely he must be!

She pictured him in the library, full of the bitterness her action had brought him—a broken figure after his interview with Pratt. She must go to him.

She slipped out of the door and, running down the stairs softly, turned toward the library, where she had left him, and entered the room.

"*Chiquita!*"

She stopped short, her heart beating madly. She had not expected to find Ramon there. He was alone.

Instinctively, the man read in her eyes what she had kept from him that afternoon. He sought her hands and drew her to him.

"Rena, I have seen your father—spoken to him! He has told me about Pratt. Is it true that you have chosen me?"

"Yes, but I have hurt him," she whispered.

"At first, yes; but not later," he soothed her. "I have spoken to him—I think he understands. He said: 'After all, blood calls.' And it does, *chiquita*, for you love me—a little, do you not?" His eyes with their tender smile which had won her, were eloquent with longing to hear the words from her lips.

She had no desire to fence with him, to give less than he gave. Again she felt the quick inrush of emotion which had flooded her a few hours before, and a great joy possessed her that she could love him so deeply. Conscious of no reserve, glad to reach out and be drawn to him, she lifted her head bravely, her eyes meeting his.

"Love you?" she asked, with a curious little tremble she made no effort to suppress. "Love you—a little? I can't begin, dear, to tell you how very much!"



TRAGEDY

THE solemn tragedy and end is near,
Not as I thought, but in the ordained way;

The spirit that abandons its racked clay,
Pausing before it seeks another sphere,
Knowing it may no longer fashion here

The dreams and hopes it fashioned yesterday,
Seems in its silence more to mean and say
Than all the song of many a crowded year.

She reassures me of eternity,

Lying there, still as sculpture and as fair;
She brings such wide-horizoned hope to me
That joy grows in my heart, and not despair;
And I perceive that greater things must be
Beyond this world hung in a bubble of air.

HARRY KEMP.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Ginevra Amieri:

The "Ghost" Siren.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, not yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

THIS story begins with its heroine's death.

She was Ginevra Amieri, most beautiful woman in sixteenth-century Florence; archsiren, yet a siren with a soul. A hundred men of high degree had loved her and had wooed her most ardently. One of these she had married. One of these she had loved. And the man she loved was not the man she married. Most assuredly, the man she married was not the man she loved.

Ginevra was of the exalted Amieri stock, whose vaunted lineage ran back to the day when a band of Pisan freebooter nobles swooped down upon a huge riverside meadow, on the banks of the Arno, and seized it as the site for a future city. The meadow was ablaze with wonderful flowers. Because of this, the Pisans named their new city Firenze, or Florence.

From childhood, Ginevra's superwoman charm flashed forth. Slender, dark, exquisite, her graceful body vibrated with an inner flame. Her father, stodgy old Messer Amieri, viewed her beauty and fascinations with smug delight. Here was an asset which might swell the already bloated fortunes, by marriage; or, through the same means,

might add new luster to the ancient Amieri name. Wherefore the old noble guarded his treasure-daughter right zealously. He kept a watchful eye upon her ever-growing list of suitors. Relentlessly, he weeded out the undesirables and compared the advantages of the elect.

The foremost undesirable was Antonio Rondinelli. Head and shoulders above the rest of the elect, stood old Francesco Agolanti.

Let us waste a minute's time over these leaders of the two far-differing factions among Ginevra's suitors.

Rondinelli was young, good to look at, clean of limb and of soul. And with all that soul and with his heart and with the rest of him, he worshiped Ginevra. But, except for his small house on the Lung Arno and a still smaller ancestral bank account, he had no material claims to back his wooing.

Agolanti had a fortune which would have brought bliss to an army of income-tax collectors. His name was ancient. His rank was well-nigh equal to the Magnifico's. His only handicap—and in the eyes of Messer Amieri this was no handicap at all—was that he was twenty-seven years Ginevra's senior.

Nothing but the gloriously incurable idiocy of youth could have lured Rondinelli into competition with such an opponent. Yet he threw himself into the contest with an ardor which would not

recognize defeat. From earliest boyhood he had loved Ginevra. As children, they had been playmates. Very naturally, very beautifully, an answering love for Rondinelli awoke in Ginevra's heart. Secretly, the two rash young people plighted their troth.

Rondinelli was the one man in Ginevra's life. Of all her myriad suitors, she had eyes and thoughts for none but him. Being young and love-daft and inexperienced in the iron game of life, the lovers could see no reason why their romance should not blossom into a divinely happy marriage. And so, for the merest handful of time, they dwelt in paradise.

Then Messer Amieri discovered their innocent secret. And he put up the shutters on paradise. Forbidding Ginevra to see Rondinelli again, he forced her to assent to old Agolanti's distasteful love-making. Ginevra was heartbroken. But what could she do?

Remember, please, that all this happened in the sixteenth century, and not in the twentieth; in medieval Florence, and not in youth-bossed America. By law Ginevra was obliged to follow her father's commands, whatever those commands might be. It was an age and a land wherein parents still held full legal power over the destinies of their minor children.

Amieri bade his weeping daughter to marry Francesco Agolanti. She obeyed. There was a gorgeous and superexpensive ceremony. Largesse was scattered to the crowds. The bride was engulfed in priceless wedding gifts. Then, in due form, she was conducted to Agolanti's Palazzo, there to take up the bitter burden of everyday life with a man she loathed.

But this is no Decameron tale. If you yearn for a veiled narrative of Rondinelli's furtive midnight visits to Ginevra's balcony, while her rich old husband slept, you are going to be disappointed. There were no such visits.

Even in sixteenth-century Italy there were clean wives—women who lived true to their sworn wedding vows. We get our ideas of medieval Italian love life chiefly from Boccaccio, and we forget that Boccaccio's book was branded as a filthy libel, while he still lived; and that it was burned in the Piazza del Signoria by the local hangman, at command of the outraged Florentines.

No, Ginevra "played the game." She was true to the hog-souled old bridegroom her father had made her marry. She put Rondinelli out of her life, even though she could not for one hour put him out of her thoughts. And daily she grew sadder and more feeble. Her heart was broken and her strength was ebbing. No longer desiring to live, she found life no longer desired her.

As for young Rondinelli, he went stolidly ahead with the business of existence. His heart was as dead as was Ginevra's. Yet his body kept on—as is the way of bodies. His love for Ginevra would last as long as he himself. There was no other woman in the world for him, except the sweetheart he had lost.

And so a dreary twelve months dragged on.

Then, the plague swept Florence. Plagues were forever sweeping ancient Italian cities—this being before the ultratransitory twentieth century, when influenza and pneumonia can claim ten thousand cases a day, in a single up-to-date metropolis.

One of the first victims of the Florentine plague was Ginevra. She did not want to live. For months she had been pining away. The pestilence found her a pitifully easy mark.

Throughout the stricken city went the tidings that Ginevra, the beautiful, was dead. The beauty-loving city paused in its plague panic to make public mourning for its loveliest daughter. A score of noblemen and artists, who had sued vainly for Ginevra's hand, put on

black for her. The funeral was attended by thousands. The streets were lined with hatless men who stood with bowed heads as the torch-lit cortège filed past. Rondinelli alone wept unseen, shut up in his desolate little house.

The laws governing plague victims forced an indecently prompt funeral for the departed beauty. Within twenty-four hours after her eyes closed, Ginevra was entombed in the Agolanti vault, in the narrow space between the Duomo and its Campanile.

But Ginevra was not dead.

She awoke from her deathlike trance at midnight, less than ten hours after her burial. She awoke to find herself shrouded in grave clothes and lying on a slab in the Agolanti mausoleum. Beyond the white shroud that enwrapped her, she wore no garment. Her feet were bare. Her hands were tied across her breast in the form of a cross. The vault was icy cold.

You will see that the luckless girl's meek obedience to her father, in the matter of marriage, had been due to no weakness of mind nor of will; for a woman of less brain and nerve would have gone mad at finding herself swathed in grave clothes, at dead of night, and surrounded by the moldering skeletons of her husband's ancestors.

She had no idea how she came to be in so grisly a place, nor that she had been pronounced dead by the able quacks who had attended her during her brief illness.

The light of a solitary votive taper made her whereabouts waveringly visible to her. It showed her, too, the bronze door of the vault—a door which, through somebody's blessed carelessness, had not been sealed shut after the interment.

Ginevra fought back the wave of terror that gripped her. Feebly she set to work freeing her hands from their funereal cords. Climbing down from the slab, she made her way to the

door. Summoning all her frail strength, she thrust the massive bronze portal open wide enough to permit her to escape into the street.

Though she was ignorant as to the reason of her presence in the vault, yet, as she crouched there against the wall of the Campanile, the truth began to filter in upon her. She remembered her short, sharp illness, and the weeping relatives who had thronged about her bed just before she had lost consciousness. She remembered, too, a hundred stories of premature burial. Such interments were far from uncommon in olden days, as records of many lands attest.

Yes, Ginevra understood. And she understood what her next move must be. She was still the wife of Francesco Agolanti. And to her husband's house, in duty bound, she must return.

She set forth through the deserted midnight streets, a pitiful little figure shrouded in the ghastly cerements of death. And, by the way, the street through which she passed is still named, in honor of her journey, "The Street of the Dead." Once or twice, as she moved along, a footpad or other night prowler came curiously up to her, only to flee in horror at sight of the dead-white face and the clinging grave clothes. It was an age when not even the wisest savant doubted the existence of ghosts.

And so, not only unmolested, but shunned, she found her way at last to the Palazzo Agolanti. At her knock, a drowsy porter peered through the wicket. Then, with a howl of fright that awakened the entire household, he left the door still locked and fled shrieking to his master's bedroom.

Francesco Agolanti was snoring. It had been a long and harrowing day for the pseudowidower. And nature was refreshing him with a dreamless sleep. Upon these heavy slumbers intruded the yells of the porter—yells proclaiming

that the spirit of the Donna Ginevra was pleading for admission at the outer gate.

Incredulous, cranky, still only half awake, Agolanti stumbled mutteringly downstairs and to the gateway. One blinking glance through the wicket sent him staggering back, horrified, into the arms of his chattering servants.

Agolanti was a wise man, and well versed in ghost traditions. He knew, for instance, that vampires and ghouls and other demons had a pleasing way of assuming the face and form of some newly dead person and, thus disguised, of entering the homes of the bereaved relatives and dragging them to hell.

Knowing all this, he was not to be fooled by the pathetic little apparition which shivered under the light of the gateway lamp, nor by the trembling little voice which pleaded for admission.

Agolanti knew well enough that this was not his lovely wife. His wife lay dead in the sealed family vault in the shadow of the Duomo. This weird visitor was a demon, come to lure him to perdition. Once let such a devil set foot in the house, and Agolanti's soul would be lost.

Drowning Ginevra's appeals in a thunder of scared denunciation, Agolanti bade the specter be gone. He shouted to his servants to sprinkle the courtyard with holy water. Then, crucifix in hand, he ran back to bed and buried himself under the covers.

For more than an hour, the half-frozen Ginevra crouched at the outer gate of her husband's house, begging vainly to be let in. Then, as the night wind bit deep into her tender flesh, she turned her weary steps to her father's house.

Old Messer Amieri, like his smug son-in-law, was peacefully sleeping when Ginevra's summons at the door aroused him. At the sound of his daughter's voice, he bellowed an exorcism against all demons, and commanded her in the name of the Holy Trinity to

depart. Nor could all Ginevra's entreaties and explanations lure him to the door, or convince him that she was not a fiend.

From house to house, of her kinsfolk and of Agolanti's, the weary girl wandered. Everywhere, she was driven away by the terrified devil dodgers.

At last, shortly before dawn, she dragged herself to the little home of Antonio Rondinelli. Rebuffed everywhere else, and sadly in need of shelter, she turned, as a last resort, to the man she loved and had lost.

In all that stupidly slumbering city, Rondinelli had been sleepless. Throughout the endless night, he had lain weeping for his dead sweetheart. The perfunctory sorrow whose reaction had set Agolanti and Messer Amieri to snoring, had nothing in common with this man's heartbreak. He had lost all that made life livable, all that he loved or had ever loved or could ever hope to love.

Ginevra was dead. Ginevra, the one woman for him! Wherefore, throughout the dark hours of night, when none could witness his anguish, Antonio Rondinelli lay sobbing his dead heart out.

Then, through the silence of the Florentine night, her dear voice was calling him. Faint with fatigue, that voice was scarcely a whisper. But it went through the stricken man's soul like a breath of flame.

Rondinelli sprang from bed and flung wide the door of his house. On the threshold stood Ginevra. Swaying with weakness and cold, she stretched out her arms to him in dumb appeal. To Rondinelli it mattered not at all whether this visitant were a demon from hell or a soul-devouring ghoul. It was enough for him to know that the apparition bore the face and form of Ginevra, and that it had called to him in Ginevra's loved voice.

Angel or devil, he cared not. He adored her. She had come back to him from the grave. That was all he knew

or cared. With a cry of rapture, he caught the fainting woman to his breast and carried her tenderly into the house. He sent a servant for his mother. And between mother and son, Ginevra was nursed back to health.

Rondinelli's servant had a blabbing tongue. Word of Ginevra's whereabouts came to her father and to Agolanti. Learning the truth, they hurried to Rondinelli's home and demanded that he give up to them the woman he and his mother had healed. Rondinelli refused to restore Ginevra to them, and he ordered them from his house, telling them they had cast off Ginevra and that they therefore had no further claim to her.

The husband and father then went before the "Signioria," rulers of Florence, and invoked their aid in making Rondinelli give up to Agolanti the wife he was harboring. The Signioria sent a delegation to Rondinelli's home. There they learned the truth. They also learned from Ginevra's own lips that she loved Rondinelli and dreaded to go back to her husband. The Signioria took the case under solemn advisement and at last handed down a decision which is still preserved in the archives of

Florence. Here is the gist of this decision:

Whereas competent doctors had pronounced Ginevra to be dead, and whereas the said Ginevra had been buried in due and regular form and by all rites of the church, therefore the said Ginevra was legally dead. As such, her husband and father had no further claim upon her. The Signioria, furthermore, "refused to direct the future actions of a legally disembodied spirit."

Freed thus from Agolanti and from her daughterly obligations, Ginevra accepted rapturously the pleas of Rondinelli for an immediate marriage.

Much as Ginevra's story reads like a fairy tale, it is true in every respect, and is so recorded in Florentine history. It has one distinct quality in common with fairy tales. Ginevra "dwelt in great happiness" with Rondinelli until the end of her long life. This, by itself, is a striking exception to the average super-woman's fate.

She played the game squarely from first to last. Is that why Destiny granted so happy an ending to her story? "Playing square" has seldom been a super-woman trait. Perhaps that accounts for the exception.

RACONTEUR

THE Earth remembers many, many things,
Kept of her pride, a rich and ancient lore,
The fading footprints of her transient Springs,
Her nameless cities, and the stones they wore.
Those sweetened shrines that men had perished for,
And women who were music for their times—
These, and the world's long iliads of war,
Will haunt her heart like dear, remembered rhymes.

I have imagined how it might be so,
When Earth takes home this wandering dust again,
There may be stories I shall come to know,
Of tragic queens and towns and valiant men—
Old, honored tales that Earth may tell to me,
As mothers do, for children at the knee.

DAVID MORTON.



Nothing in Common

By Nancy Boyd

Author of "The Seventh Stair,"
"The White Peacock," etc.



THAT puts Judith with Larry Lowry," said Mrs. Mac, frowning and scanning the list, "which is a pity, as they have nothing in common."

Drayton pressed his thumbs to his eyeballs.

"What about Lucile?" he suggested. "Isn't she more his sort? Plays tennis, drives her own car, kind of blond and jazzy. What about Lucile?"

"Well—that's so. But no, that wouldn't do, either. I couldn't take Lucile away from Joey."

"Bertha," said Allan Drayton, looking at her with some amusement and gently wringing his hands, "why do you always stew so over these guests of yours? Why don't you let 'em alone? They'd get on quite as well. Two machines and tennis and a couple of canoes, one safe and one perilous, and a hill anybody can climb and yet call it a climb, and woods you can't get lost in, but can get out of sight in—why, my dear, what's the sense of pairing 'em off in an Eden like this? You couldn't keep 'em apart if you tried. Just invite a bunch of people down and give one picnic. Then come over to Blue Hill with us and spend the summer. And nobody'll know you've gone."

"That's all very well," said Mrs. Mac. "And there's nobody I'd rather spend the summer with than you—un-

less perhaps it's my husband. But it doesn't work out. Nobody knows what they'll do after you get them started. But you've got to have some system to begin with. And you've got to start them right. If you invite a—what-chermaycallit—ornithologist, you've got to provide an ornithologist; that's all there is to it. It's like solitaire, you know—no matter how mixed up it gets, and how soon you get stalled, there has to be the possibility somewhere of its coming out even."

"For instance, take Helen and Gene," she went on. "Both cartoonists, and inseparable, my dear! Which is just as it should be, and does one's old eyes good. That's all right, dear, you needn't bother; I know I don't look it. And then there are Maida and what's his name—always together. They both write cinema scenarios."

Drayton put his thumb and middle finger to the back of his neck, and pinched.

"Well, then, take Larry yourself," he said. "I dare say that's what you're getting at. And leave Judith to me. I like Judith. She has the handsomest hair this side the fourteenth century. And now that I think of it, I wonder it didn't occur to you before to throw us together, Bertha, we are so obviously suited to one another in every way, both having come from Wisconsin.

Now give me some tea, if you don't mind. If it gets any colder I'll have to have a straw in it."

By Friday afternoon of the following week everything was running smoothly. Two by two she shooed them out in the morning, and two by two she watched them come in at night; and Mrs. Mac was pleased. The fellow cartoonists were inseparable, as she had said. It looked like a match. The cinema lady and gentleman were helpless out of each other's sight.

But, on the morning of Judith's arrival, the following conversation had taken place in the breakfast room, where coffee and toast were always kept hot for a belated guest or a tardy riser.

Through the long sunny windows a bit of the garden was visible, and a stretch of well-kept driveway, in which sat a low-bodied, bright red car, waiting to be taken out.

"Who drives the chariot?" asked Judith.

"Ben Hur," said Mrs. Mac.

"And just then Larry came out of the garage.

"My soul!" said Judith.

Mrs. Mac looked up abruptly from her study of a cigarette hole somebody had burned in a tumbler mat.

"What's the trouble?" she asked with apprehension.

Judith was silent. After a moment she said:

"Bertha—what a lovely boy! Who is he?"

"Oh, my heavens!" said Mrs. Mac. "You might know! It's Larry Lowry, dear; and that's just what he is, and that's *all* he is—a lovely boy. He can neither read, write, add, nor subtract, comparatively speaking, and he doesn't know Cezanne from Julius Cæsar. You have nothing in common, Judith, and you may as well leave him alone. Besides, he likes Lucile, and is trying

to get her away from Joey. There she comes now. See?"

"Why, Bert! What have I done to deserve such a beating? I merely said, 'What a lovely boy! Who is he?' Lucile may have him. I don't want him. I thought I'd like to paint him, that's all."

"Oh, my heavens!" said Mrs. Mac.

"Well, there they go," she continued.

"You'd better paint them together, both sitting on the napes of their necks with their hair standing out behind."

There was a short silence.

"Come on out, if you've finished, dear," said Mrs. Mac, "and let me show you the grounds."

"You haven't any grounds," said Judith dreamily. "Do you suppose he'd mind if I painted him, provided I didn't interfere with his—whatever it is he does instead of add or subtract?"

"He doesn't do anything. No, of course he wouldn't mind. He'll expect it, anyway," she added with a sudden inspiration. "All girls make a fuss over him. I'll put you together at dinner, and you can ask him."

But Judith had not asked him. She had devoted all her attention to Allan Drayton, and left Larry open to Lucile, who vamped him pitilessly. And Mrs. Mac congratulated herself upon a little coup.

On this aforementioned Friday afternoon everything was running smoothly, and Mrs. Mac was pleased. Lucile had driven Joey into town to the movies. Judith and Allan Drayton were on their way to the lake, with paddles and pillows. Everybody else, excepting Larry, was playing golf. And Larry was on the top step of the porch beside her, much handsomer than Apollo, and apparently quite contented.

Mrs. Mac had never admitted even to herself why she invited beautiful boys to her house for a part of the summer. She never eloped with them.

She never even permitted them to kiss her. But she did love to have them about. In fact, she liked them very close by, indeed.

Perhaps she did not know, when she laid her hand on Larry Lowry's knee in order to break a rose from the trellis, that she was trying to charm him. And certainly Larry did not know it.

"Here, I'll do that!" he exclaimed, jumping up. "Which one'll you have?"

Mrs. Mac sighed, and folded her hands in her lap.

"It doesn't matter," she said.

Larry considered the roses for a moment.

"Really," he vouchsafed at length, "there doesn't seem to be a rose on that bush that doesn't belong there. I—I'd hate to take the responsibility of deciding which one to cut off. 'Twould leave a regular hole, you know. What do you want it for, Bertha?"

"Oh—to leave on the step," said Mrs. Mac.

"Well, you can't have it." Larry sat down again beside her.

"Anyhow," he added gallantly, "you don't need so many roses."

Just at this moment he espied Judith and Allan on their way to the canoes.

"If you can tell me," said Larry with feeling, "what she sees in that dyspeptic school-teacher, I'd like to know!"

"Mr. Drayton is not a school-teacher," Mrs. Mac rebuked him, while her heart sank for no ostensible reason, "and his digestion is excellent. There is no point to your remark, Larry. And you are an unpleasant boy."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Larry seized both her hands and kissed them contritely, while her heart rose for no ostensible reason. "But you know what I mean, old Bertie, don't you, dear? She's such a sweet little child, and——"

"Who, Judith?" screamed Mrs. Mac. "Oh, my heavens, Larry! Are you stupid?"

"What do you mean by that?" he inquired simply.

"What do I mean? Why, I mean—I mean—I mean she's taller than I am—by an inch and a half. Come into the house. It's hotter than the devil out here."

"There's something very silly about a parasol in a canoe, isn't there?" Judith was saying. "I dare say there were at one time on this lake canoes of birch bark, paddled by Indians with tomahawks, and feathers in their hair, and——"

"Pardon me," Drayton interrupted her. "Don't you think that a parasol in any environment, a parasol in a battlefield, a parasol in a coal mine, say, would be an austere and solemn sight in comparison with the spectacle, in a canoe or elsewhere, of a serious, able-bodied wild man, with his hair stuck full of feathers? It seems to me, my dear Miss Blair, that no woman, however silly she might be—and women are very silly—could ever be half as silly as an Indian. By the way, do you swim?"

"Certainly not," said Judith. "I am far too reticent. Only fishes swim, Mr. Drayton, and very stout ladies in the Hippodrome. I can fly a little," she added helpfully.

In ten minutes they were talking about Larry Lowry.

It seemed to Judith that she could not escape from this boy. She had not exchanged five words with him in all the time she had been here, but she was always catching sight of him in the distance or overhearing his name spoken or walking around his red car in the drive. And now Drayton had asked her point-blank if she did not consider him a charming fellow.

"Really, I don't know," she replied almost with asperity. "The man is an utter stranger to me. He is good looking—in a healthy way. But so is

my butler. And my butler has never excited me in the least."

The next morning at about ten o'clock, as Judith came out upon the porch in the sunshine, bidding a casual good morning to everybody present, Larry Lowry arose with abruptness from the hammock in which Lucile was gently swinging him to and fro, and asked her, Judith, to go for a drive with him.

Everybody was astonished. Silence fell upon the group.

Mrs. Mac tried to save the situation by crying:

"Oh, Larry, why must you take away in one fell whatchermaycallit the two nicest people here?"

But that helped very little.

Judith was too dumfounded to think up an excuse, even if she had wished to, so she said: "Why, thank you, Mr. Lowry. I should love to."

And in three minutes they were off.

For the first two miles neither of them said a word. Judith was determined that she would not begin a conversation or in any way help him out. He must explain all by himself, in the face of her unwieldy nonchalance, the cause of this sudden assault and abduction, for it amounted to nothing less, and apologize for it.

"Do you like to go fast or slow?" asked Larry Lowry, when they were going very fast indeed.

"Slow," said Judith promptly, "so I can see things."

"There's nothing to see. If we pass anything, I'll slow up."

And on they went.

Judith was annoyed. Also, she was amused. She stole a glance at him from under the hand with which she was steadying her hat. He looked handsome, ingenuous, and untroubled.

"There's a bird you might be interested in," said Larry conscientiously, jerking his head to one side. "But we

don't have to stop, because he's going as fast as we are."

"Thank you," said Judith, and looked at the bird dutifully.

"Now we're coming to something nice," said he, as they swooped down upon a little wooden bridge. "Ever notice? Listen. What does it sound like?"

"Sounds like somebody galloping after us," said Judith without hesitation.

"Doesn't it? Isn't it great? I knew you'd get that. Don't you like it?"

Judith paused a moment, and then said honestly:

"Yes, I like it very much. I've always noticed it."

"Really? I thought so!"

"Now, just why did you think so, if you don't mind?" she inquired skeptically.

He was unabashed.

"Oh, I don't know—color of your hair, I guess."

There was another pause.

"What nonsense!" Judith burst out suddenly, and threw back her head and laughed.

"Isn't it?" said Larry at once, and shouted with laughter.

He turned upon her abruptly the bluest eyes she had ever seen.

"You're a lovely girl," he said.

And on they went.

A few miles more, and they turned in upon what seemed a wood road, and pursued their way more slowly for a time, through spotted sunlight, under very low, leafy branches. The grass came high up under the car.

"Where are we going?" Judith had always wanted to know where this road led.

"That's it," said Larry Lowry.

"You mean you don't know?"

"Haven't the faintest idea. Always wanted to follow this road, that's all."

"So've I," said Judith.

It occurred to each of them at this

juncture that they must have much in common.

"Nobody seems to have come this way for a long time," she remarked presently.

"You've said it," he replied. "This is our private and exclusive adventure."

So it was an adventure! She had thought it must be, and was glad to hear him say as much.

They came out into a sunny clearing and Larry shut off the engine.

"Do you mind?" he asked. "It's so sort of pretty here."

They sat for a long moment under the hot, sweet air.

The afternoon grew drowsy around them.

A bee boomed into the clearing and out, and it was still again.

Larry turned to her suddenly, and then turned away.

"Nothing," he explained. "I just wanted to be sure you hadn't gone."

There was another silence.

Simultaneously they wondered why they were there. And each hoped the other was not wondering it. A little wind blew over the grass.

"It smells like strawberries," said Judith.

He opened the door of the car and jumped out.

"Come on," he said, and held up his arms to her.

Checking her first impulse, which had been to leap into his arms, Judith wavered for an instant on the step, looking down at him. She was not accustomed to this manner of disembarking from an automobile. And yet—

Before she had time to decide about it, his arms dropped and a dark flush went up his face.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a low voice, looking down at the grassy wheel rut. "I'm awfully sorry. I—I guess I didn't think what I was doing. It seemed—sort of natural, somehow.

Er—didn't it strike you as sort of natural?"

Judith stared at him.

"Well, of all the——" she began, and stopped.

She laid a hand on his shoulder and scanned his face, her brows drawn together slightly.

"Yes—yes—you funny boy," she said in a soft, swift voice. "The most natural thing, God knows, in all the world!" And she stepped down beside him. "Shall we look for strawberries?"

He followed her along the little swath her skirts made in the high grass.

"Sort of a cute little hill," said Larry, in the course of their progress. "Nice and soft to roll down. I suppose it would mess you up awfully," he added reluctantly.

"I don't know," said Judith.

After ten giddy minutes of rolling and climbing and rolling, Judith picked herself up from the bottom of the hill and leaned her head against Larry's arm, while, green and blue and sunny, the world spun round her.

"Your face is all hot," said Larry. "If we found a brook, would you go wading with me?"

"I think I would," said Judith.

And presently they found a brook.

Half an hour later, climbing back up the slippery bank, with their shoes and stockings in their hands, Larry said to her:

"Could you climb a tree?"

"If there were a nest in it, I could," said Judith.

"It's wicked to gather them by the stems," she was saying, "it wastes the green ones."

"Well, that's all right. The green ones are no good, anyhow. They oughta be wasted." Larry looked up at her and grinned.

It was an hour later. They were sitting rather close together in a small

circle of flattened grass, hidden from the sight of everything but the bees and an infrequent swallow.

"It's nice here, isn't it?" he said.

"Do you suppose if I lie down flat on my back I'll get strawberry all over me?"

"I suppose so," said Judith.

Whereupon he lay down flat on his back, put his hands under his head, and closed his eyes.

"I shall probably go to sleep," he informed her.

"I dare say," said Judith.

She folded her hands about her knees and sat looking down at him.

It did not occur to her that she had wished to paint him. She wished now simply to look at him. It would be pleasant, she reflected, to have him around where one might often sit and look at him.

"Do you ever think, Larry Lowry?" asked Judith abruptly.

"Never," said he without opening his eyes. "But I sometimes dream."

She was silent.

"It gets you further," he explained.

After a moment he whispered very softly:

"Judith—Judith—Judith.

"Excuse me," he said then, raising his lids and looking up at her out of blue eyes flecked with brown and green in the sunlight. "I was dreaming."

Judith laughed a little uncertainly.

"What an absurd—child!" she said.

"Child! See here—that's pretty good—from a baby like you!" He rose on his elbow and frowned across at her with quizzical superiority.

Judith looked away from him and fastened her attention on a small spider climbing a blade of grass.

"Let's go home," she suggested after a little.

"Why? Aren't you happy?"

She was shocked by the question somewhat, but replied quite simply.

"Yes. I am happy."

"Then why do you want to go away? That's a rum idea—to go away when you're happy!"

She smiled a little, but said nothing.

"What's the matter? Have I displeased you in any way?"

"No. It's not that. You—you have pleased me in—in every way. I—I— Shall we go home?"

"Why? Why?" he questioned her, like a child. "Why—Judith?"

She turned her head and smiled at him indulgently.

"We can't stay here always, can we?"

"Yes, we can—Judith! If we only wanted to, we could."

"Ah, but we can't *want* to. Don't you see, little boy?"

For some unaccountable reason Judith Blair was weeping. She was weeping as she sometimes did at the theater, quite unexpectedly. Her eyes were round with unshed tears. She dared not wink her lashes.

"I can want to. And I do," said Larry Lowry.

"Well, in that case, I should say we had better go at once," she replied very gayly, and started to rise.

He jumped to his feet and held down his hands to her.

"All right—just as you say. Of course, I can't expect you to feel the way I do about it. You haven't the same inducement. *Would* be a rum place to spend a lifetime, come to think of it—a strawberry patch! Still, there's something in it—all the— See here! Are you crying?"

"No." Judith shook her head.

"Smoke in my eyes." She laughed, and looked up at him boldly.

He regarded her soberly.

"If you really were crying— If I really thought you were crying—" he said slowly.

"Well, what then?" she questioned brightly, and withdrew her hands, which slipped from his without his making any effort to hold them.

"Why, I—I— Were you crying?"

"Yes," said Judith.

Whereupon very quietly he took her face in his hands and kissed her eyes, first the right one and then the left one, gently, taking his time about it.

"All better now?" he asked, when he had released her.

She stood staring at him, white-faced.

"Why did you do that?" she asked in a low voice.

"Oh, I don't know." The dark flush mounted his cheek again, and he looked off over the field. "Color of your hair, I guess. Come on. We gotta be going."

Lucile and Joey were having it out in the breakfast room.

"I can't see it, myself," said Joey.

"Oh, can't you?"

"No, I can't. And I don't mind saying so."

"Well, what if you can't?"

"What do you mean, what if I can't?"

"I mean, supposing you can't, what are you going to do about it?"

"Well, that's up to me, isn't it?"

"You mean it's none of my business?"

"I didn't say so."

"No, but that's what you meant."

"Well, it isn't it, is it?"

"Isn't what?"

"Any of your business."

"Well, really, if it's people's business you're talking about, Joey, I'd advise you not to—" She stopped abruptly.

"Not to what?" pursued Joey, who was not facing the window.

"Never mind," hissed Lucile angrily. He turned his head.

Judith and Larry, the unwitting subjects of the foregoing colorful and characteristic conversation, were just crossing the porch and coming toward them into the house.

As they entered, Lucile glanced up with affected indifference.

Then, suddenly leaning forward, she ran her thin, tanned fingers through her short, blond hair and stared at Judith out of cold eyes.

"Good heavens, Miss Blair!" she cried with elaborate concern. "Did you get dumped?"

Judith did not at once understand this. She knew she was rather untidy. But children always come in from play with soiled rompers and twigs in their hair. It was to be expected that she would be a bit disheveled, under the circumstances.

Still, of course, Lucile did not know the circumstances.

Judith opened her mouth to explain, and shut it without speaking. To Lucile, of all people in the world, it would be impossible to explain.

Larry, who had scarcely taken his eyes from Judith since early that morning, saw a desperate blush flood hotly to the base of her throat.

"We do look rather a mess, don't we?" said Larry suddenly. "It wasn't much. Just a little spill. We weren't going fast. Messed up the windshield a bit and busted one of the lights. Miss Blair is a little upset, Lu. Could you get her a cup of black coffee? And what about some bromo-seltzer, Jo?"

Judith stared at him, open-mouthed.

"I say!" said Joey, and bolted for the kitchen.

"Good heavens!" said Lucile, and rushed into the hall, to alarm the house.

"It's all right, dear. I'll fix it," said Larry to Judith in a rapid whisper. "Tell 'em we got tipped into a shallow ditch over by the trout brook. There are always strawberries there. I've seen 'em. She's a cat, that Lu—that's why I gotta fix it. She's cute, but she's a cat. I'll be back in a minute." And he was gone.

Almost instantly she heard the sound of the starter and the crunch of the gravel under the flying wheels.

And into the room poured Mrs. Mac,

Allan Drayton, Helen and Gene, Maida and Stan, one yellow collie, one police dog, Joey, with a very sloppy bromoseltzer, the second cook with a cup of coffee, and Lucile with an army first-aid kit and a roll of bandages.

"It—it's my wrist," said Judith with a faintness entirely unassumed, and lifted a limp arm from the depths of the chair into which she had sunk. "It doesn't hurt—I mean to say, it doesn't show, but it hurts like anything. And—and my head is sort of—queer."

"What happened?" they all shouted in chorus.

"I don't exactly know," said Judith. Which was quite the most convincing thing she could have said.

"Where's Larry?" was the next demand.

"Gone to—gone to——" said Judith, and fainted.

When Larry came back they all rushed out to look at the car.

It was properly battered.

One headlight was gone, one mud-guard badly dented, and the windshield smashed into a fringe of clinging glass.

"Certainly looks shot to pieces, old man," said Joey.

"I'll tell the world!" said Larry Lowry.

He turned to Judith.

"They didn't have any," he said, and, for no apparent reason, looked around at the crowd and scowled at everybody.

And nobody dared ask him who or what.

Judith did not come down to dinner. She did something which she had never thought to do: she kept to her room and paced the floor. Up and down, up and down; one, two, three, turn; one, two, three, turn, while the clatter of dishes and the sound of light conversation rose gayly from below.

From time to time she ran her hands ruthlessly through the copper-colored hair which was Larry's awe and ado-

ration. From time to time she bit the knuckles of her long, white hands. And all this, not in anxiety, not in despair, but in a fury of vexation and passionate resentment.

Compromised!

Not in the eyes of the world, not even in the eyes of her fellow guests—thanks to the quixotic knight-errantry of Larry Lowry!—but in her own eyes, stupidly compromised! Never again could she feel for the mad, romantic boy anything but distaste and resentment. He had flung his cloak on the mud before her, perjured his soul, upon which the poor lad probably set a tremendous value and run into a tree, in order to save her perfectly inconsequential reputation, a perfectly good, extremely comfortable, terribly expensive car. She writhed at the thought.

And in all this untidy business, she, the neat-handed—she, the cool and clever—was a helpless, indubitable, and secret partner!

Saved! Horrible thought. Saved—at the cost of the most irksome and the most comprehending of all things—gratitude and complicity.

Such a mess! For nine days at least, everybody asking her how her wrist was getting on, for four days at least the impossibility of painting with it, except on the sly, she having had the lack of foresight to hold out the right hand instead of the left hand for Lucile to bandage.

Just because in a moment's abandon she had given herself up to the sweetness of youth and out of doors and the romantic nonsense of an incipient madman, all her life in the next few weeks shaken up with Larry Lowry's as intimately as the component parts of a cocktail. Such a mess!

She could never look him in the face again.

Larry ate his dinner sullenly.

Lucile cooed over him a bit and asked

him finally if he were hurt, to which he rudely retorted:

"No—are you?"

After dinner he went out to the garage, but returned at once, and a few moments later stalked in to town to the movies, alone.

If Judith had expected Larry Lowry to dog her footsteps in the next few days, she must have been disappointed. He shunned her as a pestilence. In the presence of other people he was almost fiercely courteous and solicitous, but he saw to it that they never by any means were left alone together. And once, when she came up the steps of the porch where he lay in the hammock reading, he did not look up from his magazine, and she was convinced he had seen her coming and was avoiding speaking with her.

This troubled her not a little. The rôle he had taken was the one she had planned for herself. And now she was at a loss as to what to do. Moreover, she found herself noting a curious bleakness in the mornings and hollowness in the afternoons, as if something had been taken from her not only dear, but also near and familiar.

On Tuesday, three days after the day of the "adventure," Judith was awakened early by the sound of a motor in the drive. On an impulse, she leaped out of bed and ran to the window.

It was Larry and Lucile, piling rugs, baskets, and thermos bottles into the red car, which was repaired and polished and looking as good as new, except for some cracks on the mudguard. They were apparently off for the day. Lucile looked charming in a short skirt and a little leather coat. Her blond hair shone in the sun.

"It's almost as pretty as mine," thought Judith dismally. "She's just had it washed and waved, too—the cat!"

She watched them for a moment.

"They certainly are pretty together," she said aloud.

They were talking with great animation. Their chatter rose to the window.

"We forgot the strawberries!" Judith heard Lucile say suddenly.

"Never mind," Larry replied. "I know where we can get some. Hop in, kittens."

When they were gone Judith crept back into bed and drew the covers up over her face.

That afternoon she refused an invitation to go up Larch Hill on a picnic with Mrs. Mac and apparently everybody else at the house, except Helen and Gene, who were in town, and Larry and Lucile, concerning whose whereabouts nobody seemed very certain.

"I want to paint," said Judith. "I have an idea of something that I think will be rather nice, and I should be thinking about it all the time and wishing myself back here, if I went along."

"Well," said Mrs. Mac, "if you really must. Your things are still out in the cookhouse."

In back of the house, at some little distance from it, was a small bungalow, which Mrs. Mac had had built, in the face of her husband's ridicule, with the desire that it be used as a cookhouse. She had always wanted a cookhouse. But no cook had ever been willing even to investigate its interior, and Mrs. Mac's roasts and salads, like those of her neighbors, were prepared in the kitchen.

Into this bungalow had been packed away all that had proved to be, from time to time, no longer necessary to Mrs. Mac's ménage, but which could not yet be thrown away without giving her an uncomfortable feeling of wanton waste. Here it had been Judith's custom, the summer before, to work consistently every morning, but this summer, no urgent haste being upon her, and no driving desire, she had so far not entered the place at all.

She found her easel rather out of condition and did not attempt to use it. She propped against the wall an unfinished painting of the hill side of the lake, steadying its lower edge between the parallel boards on the top of a big trunk, and tried to paint out the landscape. This not serving, she took it down and set up an unshrunk canvas, on which she began to work feverishly.

She did not lay down her brush till after six o'clock. It was still light outside, but a little dusk was creeping into the room. She took the painting to the door at the back of the bungalow, propped it up against a chair, and sat down on the step to look at it.

She had done what Mrs. Mac had suggested, painted them "together, both sitting on the napes of their necks, with their hair standing out behind." She had not painted the car itself; she had depicted the two figures merely, against a background of irregular red planes. In the foreground was the big wheel, an ominous and sinister shape, black and shining, and so disproportionately big that one looked through its spokes at the faces behind it—Larry and Lucile, young, beautiful, reckless, bright-eyed, and mad, coming swiftly toward one, it seemed, as one regarded them, running one down, gayly, carelessly.

As she looked at it, tears gathered in her eyes and fell down upon her folded hands. She leaned forward and peered into the face of the boy. It seemed that in painting the lines of his face she had learned things about him which she did not know before. Youth, of course, and leaping fire of romance, but not so much the indolence she had thought, as an energy in the direction of dreams, and not so much the childlike credulity she had thought, as a strong disregard of the unbeloved thing, a natural aptitude, as one might say, for innocence.

She must have studied him more

carefully than she knew, as he lay in the grass at her feet that day. And the thing had not occurred which she had feared, a sudden blurring of his features before her eyes, and the consequent impossibility of limning on the canvas even his most casual aspect. It was more than an extraordinary likeness. It was Larry himself, as he might have been disclosed to her in a dream.

Another tear splashed on her hand.

She looked down at it wonderingly.

Then she looked back at the painting.

"Why, I'm in love with the poor kid," she said to herself in an awed whisper.

"I guess you are, dear," said Mrs. Mac.

With a startled exclamation Judith leaped to her feet.

"What's the matter, Bert?" she hissed in the rapid, panic-stricken voice of one suddenly roused from sleep.

"There, there," said Mrs. Mac, and stepped past her into the room.

"So this was your great idea," she went on. "Well, I don't mind saying it gives me a chill. Seems to be a worm's-eye view of 'em, done by some poor worm they're about to run over."

"You see! That's it!" cried Judith eagerly, but too unguardedly.

"You betcher life I see!" said Mrs. Mac grimly. "You're a fool, Judith Blair! You've lost your mind."

"I know it," said Judith meekly. "One does, I believe."

"One certainly does. But you—Judith, my dear girl, my—my childhood's friend, my—"

"I know, I know," Judith interrupted impatiently. "But what am I going to do about it? Tell me that."

"Yes—not me! I'd be a great one to tell you what to do in such an emergency!"

"Oh, but don't you see? This is quite different!"

Mrs. Mac groaned.

"I'm in love with the poor kid!"

"So you remarked before," said Mrs.

Mac. "Well, is he in love with you? That's the first question."

"No!" cried Judith. "He—he's playing with me!" And she went off into a fit of hysterical giggles.

Mrs. Mac clasped her hands and lifted her eyes to the ceiling.

"That I should live to see this day!"

Then she came over to Judith and put a hand on her shoulder.

"See here, ol' Judy," she said. "Before we go any further, I want to know one thing, viz: What are your intentions toward the unfortunate youth? Because if you——"

"Honorable," Judith replied promptly. "I am willing to marry him."

Mrs. Mac sank upon a bench.

"You're done for," she said. "Good ol' Jude!"

There was a long pause tenderly reminiscent, full of ghosts that were passing.

"He's got money," said Mrs. Mac finally. "Did you know that?"

"No," said Judith. "But thank God he's got something!"

"Well"—as if dismissing all of the past, Mrs. Mac rose and went to the door—"I'm going in. Are you coming?"

"In a minute. I just want to have another look at that canvas."

"No need. Here he comes himself." There was the sound of Larry's car in the drive. "Come out and have a look at the original."

"Huh-uh," said Judith, and picked up her brush.

"All right. I'm going in." She went.

Judith had no intention of touching the painting again. Such as it was, it was done; the frenzy was over. She merely wished to be alone. She laid down her brush again and seated herself on the floor in front of the canvas.

It was growing dark rapidly in the room. She looked away once at the glimmering window, and when she

looked back, the figures were scarcely visible.

She reached into the pocket of her skirt for a cigarette and matches, lighted the cigarette, and held the match before the painting, until it expired. After which, one by one, she struck all the matches she had with her, and held them up before it, while she stared, motionless, into the face of the boy.

There was a sudden deepening of the shadow in the room.

She turned sharply.

Some one was standing in the door.

Before she had time to rise, Larry was beside her. He stooped and gathered her up from the floor like a whirlwind. He kissed her face and hair and hands and her rings and the sleeves of her blouse.

"Judith," he said at last, in a breathless voice, "Bert says you're in love with me. Are you? I wanta know right off. If you aren't, I beg your pardon."

"It's perfectly all right," said Judith. "I am."

He set her down carefully, thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaned toward her.

"Oh, my God!" he said in a whisper. "Are you sure?"

"What's been the matter with you these last four days?" Judith wailed.

"Oh, Judith!" he cried. "And I thought you hated me! I tried to get out of sight all I could, but you were everywhere. It made me crazy! I've been talking about you all day long to Lucile. I told her I was crazy about you and you hated me—for—for dumping you in a ditch, I said. I had to talk to somebody. So I got Lucile."

"What did she say?"

"She said you didn't hate me. She said you were—'scuse me—all—she's awfully funny, you know—all sick to your tummy about me. That's the way she put it. It's not very pretty."

"I am, though," said Judith. "Just that."

"And then she kissed me on the forehead. She's a good kid. She— Oh, Judith! Please, dearest! Aren't you ever going to come near me? I'm waiting for you to—touch me, dear!"

Judith took a step toward him in the darkness, and paused.

"You will never wait long, I think, for me to touch you, Larry," she said. "And may God light the crooked road before us!"

She clasped her arms about his neck and drew down his head to her kiss.

"And did he marry her?" asked Allan Drayton.

It was two summers later. Mrs. Mac and he were sitting in her charming living room, very much as at the beginning of this narrative.

"Say, rather, did *she* marry *him*!" cried Mrs. Mac. "Yes, she did. In two weeks, my dear. I never saw anything like it."

"And what's happened to them? Are they still living together?"

"Oh, my heavens, yes! More than ever!"

"Hm! It *is* amusing! How about the two scenario writers?"

"Stan and Maida? Oh, that was funny! He stole a plot off her, Allan. What do you think of that? It busted up the whole thing."

"Rather," said Drayton. "And 'Gene, the cartoonist, and—er——"

"Helen? Gene and Helen got married the next fall. But they're not living together now. I understand they were terribly jealous of each other's talent; always knocking each other's work, you know. Finally she tore up one of his drawings; and he's suing for a divorce. They're on rival papers now, and always giving each other nasty digs through the press."

"Hm! Your little system doesn't always work out so well, does it, Bertha?"

"Well, it *is* funny! I admit I don't understand about Jude and Larry. They really have *nothing* in common!"

Drayton jammed his cigarette thoughtfully into the tray. He pressed two long, nervous forefingers to his slightly graying temples.

"Nothing but love," said Allan Drayton.



IN ABSENCE

THE little body, the fine dark head;

The way you moved when you laughed and raged;

The ribald, rare, rich things you said;

The tiresome, tireless wars you waged;

The half-unconscious animal grace;

The funny frown, and the short commands;

The large eyes and the delicate face;

The wise, wide mouth, and the restless hands!

You are as near as my hands and feet,

You are as far as though you were dead.

The milk carts rattle along the street—

Are you sick? Are you safe, and asleep in bed?

BABETTE DEUTSCH.



His Wife

By Pauline Brooks

Author of "The Intruder," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FORMER CHAPTERS.

John Harding's butterfly wife, Isabelle, has decided to leave him. Her devoted admirer, Tom Carewe, has persuaded her to meet him on shipboard, en route for Europe. She plans each detail carefully, and her husband is unaware of the crisis impending. On the morning of the day set for sailing, she leaves her home, ostensibly for a shopping trip. On her way to Carewe's apartment, the taxi in which she is riding is wrecked. She is thrown out and rendered unconscious by a severe blow on the head. Her husband, on his way uptown for a luncheon engagement, happens on the scene of the accident. He is distracted when he recognizes his wife. He arranges to have her removed to their home, meanwhile mystified as to where she was going. At his home, he calls for Marie, his wife's maid, and learns that she had been dismissed by her mistress that morning. He is more puzzled than ever. After several days, Mrs. Harding regains consciousness, but retains no memory of events preceding the accident. To her husband's delight, however, she is gentler, less frivolous, more serious in her interests. She is nevertheless chagrined by her inability to associate the personalities of her friends with their names on her calling list. In preparation for a dinner party to be given by Nancy de Koven, Isabelle's close friend, John describes to her each one of their associates who is likely to be present, hoping in this way to save her embarrassment. Before long, Isabelle is forced to admit to her husband that her jewels are missing. Harding employs a detective, Elkins, who, in questioning Isabelle's associates and former maid, Marie Bédon, uncovers certain facts about Isabelle's activity which are not wholly pleasing to her husband—chiefly that on the morning of the accident Mrs. Harding had stopped at Tom Carewe's apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

THE sky wore a flat, gray aspect, which is New York's usual matutinal winter greeting to the unfortunate multitudes who break the short spell of comparative silence and peace which descends upon the city between three and four o'clock.

There were no glancing sunbeams to dance merrily aslant the windows of Isabelle's bedroom, no dark, scurrying clouds to relieve the monotony of the upper world, no bright, descending snowflakes to bring joy to the child heart and cover with their soft whiteness the dirt and grime of the city streets. There was not even a fog to throw a pall of mystery over the surrounding bleakness

—for mystery suggests that something just beyond which the eye cannot see nor the imagination conjure.

Fogs, dense, beautiful fogs, are full of mystery and interest. Isabelle reflected, as she watched from her bed, through the one unshuttered window, the dull, unpromising sky line and the naked branches of the trees, bare now of any fairy mantle of snow or ice.

The sky was without tone: one of those damp, cold, windless, dark, uninteresting days with which nature is prone to punish the metropolis for the abandon of itself to the monstrous necessities of skyscrapers and soft coal.

She was glad when Rose closed the windows and lighted the fire. The de-

pression of the past few days had not lifted, but as she looked into her mirror she made a fresh resolve not to let John see her mouth droop into despondent lines nor her eyes grow dull in contemplation of the problems which vexed her spirit. She knew that, as problems, they would, in some manner and at some future time, have to be worked out, but the naturally wholesome, buoyant quality of her mind inclined her to put them, for the present, as far into the background of her thoughts as her strength of will and her regard for John's comfort made possible.

Her morning greeting, therefore, was full of sweet cheerfulness which deceived him into thinking that her mood was as bright as the smile which curved her lips.

He was to have a busy day, he said, and would not be home until late in the afternoon. She told him that she intended to take a long walk in the park, dreary as was the prospect out of doors. Just before leaving the house after luncheon she was called to the telephone. It was Nancy de Koven and she seemed much excited. Could she come over to see Isabelle right away? Isabelle hesitated over her reply. She had an engagement, she told Nancy, her mental reservation being that she would invent one rather than receive a visit from the voluble Nancy. But her friend was insistent.

"It's *fearfully* important, Bella. I must see you as soon as possible. Can't I come over at tea time?"

"Yes, of course, come to tea," agreed Isabelle with tardy hospitality. She was vaguely annoyed and irritated at the prospect of a tête-à-tête with a woman whom she was supposed to know intimately and did not.

She took the bus to Eighty-seventh Street, then walked southward through the park. Its almost deserted byways and the dead monotony and bleakness

of the scene brought back to her the haunting and puzzling questions and probings into the vanished past, which she so longed to recall.

It seemed to her that to be without a past was the most appalling, the most pitiful fate which could overtake a human being. She remembered somewhere that the happiest woman, like the happiest nations, has no history. But she felt that she would gladly exchange this awful blankness for memories, however sad or bitter.

It was a source of wonder to her that she could recall books she had read, plays or works of art she had seen, music she had heard or studied; but all these things, though precious to her as memories and though they were a part of the warp and woof of her life, were, nevertheless, unrelated, she felt, to the bald, primal facts of her very existence. Who was she, as an individual entity in this world crowded with atoms like herself? Her ego craved some distinguishing recognition.

Her mind traveled back to a conversation with John in the early days of her recovery, during which, from remarks of his, she seized upon the bare fact that she had been a Philadelphia girl and that her father and mother were both dead. Also that she had a brother in Egypt from whom they heard at rare intervals, and a married sister in England with whom she was not on very friendly terms.

As she came around a bend in one of the paths, she caught sight of a man seated on a bench. His clothes were shabby and worn; his face, sunk on his chest, was gaunt and white. As he heard her step on the gravel, he looked up and saw her. They were the only human beings in sight, but no thought of self, of fear, came to mar the exquisite impulse of compassion which swept over her as she met his tired, tragic eyes. He had no overcoat and his sack coat, the collar of which was

turned up around his throat, was worn and thin. He was young, she realized, probably not over thirty, and her quick and delicate perceptions told her that the lines in his face and his general appearance of failure were not the result of dissipation. The look in his eyes which had arrested her told a different story.

She deliberately walked up to him and stood in front of him. The man rose to his feet, painfully, as if his muscles were stiff; he raised his hand to his hat, but she quickly signified that he must not remove it. She could not tell for the moment whether his action sprang from the habit of servitude or from good breeding.

"Are you ill?" Her question came simply and her eyes did not leave his.

"I am starved, cold, and destitute. Perhaps I am ill—I don't know."

His answer was slow, dull, but as natural, as simple, as if the primeval standard still existed of equality and unconventionality between one human being and another. His voice and accent translated the meaning of his instinctive motion toward his hat. It was the instinct of a gentleman, not of a menial.

"When did you have your last meal?" The practical side of Isabelle's nature pushed the emotional side brusquely away.

He passed his hand over his eyes.

"I don't remember exactly. I had a loaf of bread yesterday. I think that is about all for two days."

A lump rose in her throat, but she said quietly:

"How long have you been without employment?"

"For two months." His answer was brief and his eyes darkened.

There she stood before him in her beautiful sables, a woman from a world of luxury and extravagance, certainly of comfort and plenty, but no impulse of envy or of bitterness stirred within

him as he looked at her. The soul back of her eyes spoke too plainly to his, and his own responded. Isabelle opened her purse and took out a five-dollar bill and her card.

"Take this and go and get something to eat at once. Lodge yourself in some decent place and come to see me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. Good-by." Her smile reflected the bit of heaven which lay in her tender heart.

He was young, he was sensitive, and the tears came painfully to his tired eyes.

"Thank you." The words were meager, but his voice and his eyes spoke for him better than words. "I will come to-morrow at ten."

Isabelle walked on; all the misery and deprivation of the great city, of the world itself, seemed suddenly to engulf her. She reached one of the small terraces which overhang Eighth Avenue; there she stopped and, leaning on the iron railing, she looked down upon the surging life below. Gradually her thoughts traveled back to her own problems.

With a sigh she turned and walked rapidly down the incline toward Eighth Avenue, with the intention of going home by street car. After the misery she had encountered, she felt a distaste for the luxury of a cab. She determined to ask John to find employment for the unfortunate young fellow whom she had just befriended.

Suddenly she stood still in the path, remembering Nancy and her prospective visit. It seemed so incongruous, so absurd to talk to Nancy de Koven after her experiences, mental and actual, of the past hour. She was in no mood for her friend, Nancy. She almost decided to stay where she was, to get lost in the mazes of the park until it was too late for her appointment. Then her good breeding asserted itself and she hastened on to the street.

When she reached the house, Simp-

son announced that Mrs. de Koven was waiting for madame in her boudoir. She opened her mouth to express disapproval of Simpson for permitting a caller to go upstairs to her room, especially in her absence, but Simpson's placid face indicated clearly enough that nothing unusual had occurred. Isabelle suddenly realized that Nancy de Koven was, in the minds of others, her intimate friend, and had been in the habit, undoubtedly, of being informally admitted to her private sitting room. So she said nothing to Simpson and in her reception of Nancy she tried to respond to that little person's effusive embrace. Nancy was, however, far too excited to be aware of Isabelle's manner. She threw an irritated look over her shoulder at Rose, who was putting some things in a bureau drawer.

"Where's Marie?" she asked abruptly.

Isabelle, with a nervous glance in Rose's direction, said:

"I—I have a new maid."

"Quite obvious, my dear. But where's Marie?"

"She left some weeks ago."

"Does madame need me?" ventured Rose timidly.

Isabelle dreaded to be left alone with Nancy, but all she could say was:

"No; you may go, Rose."

Then Nancy seized her by the arm and her dark little face quivered with excitement.

"Bella, *what* do you think? Tom reached New York early this morning."

She waited, eager and smiling, for Isabelle's response, but Isabelle merely shrank back a little and grew pale. That, however, was quite on the books, under the circumstances, and gave Nancy an added thrill of excitement.

"My dear, he telephoned me from the dock, then he came up and had luncheon with me, and told me *all* about everything—that is, *his* side of it. Of course, I had something to tell him my-

self that nearly bowled him over. Naturally he knew nothing about your accident or illness, and he's nearly wild! He didn't dare telephone or even write to you, so I promised I'd see you this afternoon." She stopped, breathless, and waited for Isabelle to speak.

With a desperate effort at self-control Isabelle murmured an inanity.

"I am glad to see you," she said, and grew a shade paler, realizing the absurdity of her remark.

Nancy's mouth and eyes grew round with wonder.

"You're glad to see me! What is the matter with you, Bella?" Then her eyes flashed in quick annoyance. "Haven't you a word to say about poor Tom?"

Isabelle twisted her fingers nervously, but looked straight into Nancy's eyes and spoke quietly.

"I haven't *anything* to say about—about—Tom."

For a second Nancy stared at her, then she spoke with slow disgust.

"Well, upon my word! You *are* pretty cool! Considering *his* state of mind for the past six weeks, I call you damned heartless!"

Isabelle made a supreme effort to meet this thing which threatened her with dignified unconcern.

"I am at a loss to know why Tom—as you call him—should have *any* state of mind about *me*."

Nancy stared and stuttered in her amazement.

"Tom—as I call him! Are you crazy, Isabelle?"

More gently Isabelle answered:

"Perhaps I am. Suppose we let it go at that."

Nancy fluttered about the room as confused as she was angry.

"I don't know what sort of a game you're putting up, my dear, but it's not an amusing one." She stopped abruptly in front of Isabelle. "*What* are you driving at, Bella?"

A sudden resolution came to Isabelle. She walked over to the window and stood looking out, trying to decide how to tell Nancy what, obviously, she must know sooner or later. Nancy meanwhile turned to watch Isabelle, and her roving glance perceived John's picture on a table.

"Oh, my, oh, my! John's picture! The last time I was in this room there wasn't any picture of *John* in evidence." She looked around the room. "What have you done with *Tom's* picture?" she asked severely.

With a proud gesture that suggested surrender of a long-guarded citadel, Isabelle turned to her innocent and unconscious persecutor.

"My friends will have to know sooner or later," she began firmly. "I suppose I may as well begin with you." She hesitated a second, then went on with a rush to get it over with. "I had concussion of the brain, and I've lost my memory." She looked coldly at Nancy.

Nancy started back with a cry.

"You've lost your memory! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I've lost all sense of identity. My memory, as far as people and events in my past life are concerned, is an utter blank."

Nancy was stupefied.

"Forgotten—*me—Tom—John!*"

"Yes—but John doesn't know yet," said Isabelle calmly. "He thinks it's only a partial lapse of memory."

Nancy gazed at Isabelle with an expression which approached horror. Then, like the sudden passing of a cloud, her face relaxed into a smile which ended in a merry laugh.

"I always knew you were clever, Bella, but I never knew *how* clever till this minute." She looked at her friend from under half-closed lids. "So *that's* your little game! It's such a damn clever one—and such a damn funny one—that I don't know whether to laugh or weep." Very deliberately Nancy

lighted a cigarette, watching Isabelle with a mocking expression.

"What do you mean by my little 'game'?" Isabelle spoke coldly after a second's pause.

"Oh, come now, Isabelle. There's a limit, you know. It's quite natural for you to go to any length to keep John—and the world—from knowing that you tried to run away with Tom Carewe." Isabelle gave a violent start, which Nancy construed in her own fashion, then went on calmly: "But you don't have to lie to me, my dear."

Isabelle bit her lips in sudden anger.

"I'm not lying. How dare you say such a thing! I remember *nothing* that happened before my accident."

Nancy's smile mounted to her eyes; they sparkled with humorous appreciation of the situation.

"I'm speechless with admiration for the originality of your scheme. Why, it will disarm John's righteous wrath even if he finds out anything. It leaves him perfectly helpless." She gazed at her more thoughtfully. "You really are a wonder!"

Isabelle had difficulty in controlling sudden tears.

"If you don't believe me," she said almost in a whisper, "ask Doctor Bowyer."

"Don't be *too* clever, dear." Again there was a touch of scorn in Nancy's tone. "Naturally, you've *got* to fool old Bowyer, but do respect *my* intelligence."

Isabelle took a quick step nearer to Nancy and spoke eagerly:

"I swear to you that, except for what I heard at your dinner, I haven't the least idea who Tom Carewe is. *Please* believe me!"

Nancy studied her with a quizzical smile.

"My dear," she said slowly, "you'd be a gold mine to a playwright. You remember that play of Barrie's where the wife's lover gets killed just as

they're about to run away? If only she could have lost *her* memory!"

"I wish to God I *hadn't* lost mine!" said Isabelle with an emotion which was wasted on Nancy, whose mind was so fixed on a definite conclusion that it was closed to any other impression.

"Don't worry, dear," she said, softly sarcastic. "It's not lost—just conveniently mislaid." She gave a sudden start and crossed to a chair on the other side of the room. "With all this nonsense about your memory, I've forgotten one of the principal things I came for." She lifted a leather box from the chair and returned to where Isabelle stood watching her. "Here, Bella!" She held out the box as she approached. "Tom's been worried to death about your jewels. Afraid their disappearance might cause you embarrassment. Nothing to do, of course, but hang on to them when he woke up the morning after an found you weren't on board."

As Nancy thrust the box toward her, Isabelle recoiled swiftly with mind as well as body, her eyes staring, fixed on the leather box. Nancy came a step nearer and swung the box to Isabelle.

"Here, take them, for Heaven's sake! You're getting on my nerves."

Dazed, and with a sense of panic creeping upon her, Isabelle mechanically took the box.

"Are they my lost jewels?" she asked vaguely. Then a feeling of sudden faintness impelled her to sit down in the nearest chair, dropping the box to the floor.

Nancy promptly drew up a chair and spoke confidently.

"What do you mean by your 'lost jewels'?"

"The other day," said Isabelle slowly, "John discovered that several valuable pieces of jewelry were missing, and he is employing a detective to find them." Even yet full apprehension did not come to her.

"But, good gracious! Where *were*

your wits, not to think of *something* to cover up your tracks? Why didn't you tell John that you'd put them in the bank?"

Automatically Isabelle followed this point.

"John looked in the bank safe the first day."

"Well, you could have said you took them to some designer for resetting. He wouldn't have gone after them certainly nor inquired where they were. It wasn't any of *his* business—they're your mother's jewels. That would have given time to hear from Tom."

"I suppose it's no use," said Isabelle despairingly, "to repeat that there was no reason, as far as I knew, for covering up my tracks."

"Oh," groaned Nancy. "That memory stuff again! You mean that John would have wondered how you came to remember having taken them to a designer? But you *say* he takes for granted that you haven't forgotten *every* little thing."

"I mean," said Isabelle, her eyes dark with an intense effort to think clearly and speak convincingly, "that, as I didn't know of the *existence* of my jewels, except from what John said—and the pearls in my portrait downstairs—I had no motive for pretending that I knew where they were."

A new reflection had come to Nancy and she scarcely heeded what Isabelle was saying.

"Detective—hunting for your jewels—incidentally for your maid, Marie. So *that's* what he was up to!" she said abstractedly. Then she looked at Isabelle with a puzzled frown. "That detective employed by John came to see me in regard to Marie's whereabouts." Isabelle moved uneasily with a vague sense of menace. "He pumped me," went on Nancy, "and, come to think of it, I'll bet he was after more than information about Marie. He asked two very odd and impertinent questions

about Tom and his friendship for you. I effectually dismissed him and thought he was just insolently curious." She frowned and looked earnestly at Isabelle. "You'd better watch out, Bella. These detectives sometimes—just by accident—stumble on embarrassing facts. I advise you to *find* your jewels yourself right away and get this man Elkins off the case. You may be sorry if you don't. Presuming, that is, that you want to keep *up* your little bluff with John, until you get ready again to run away with Tom, who is patiently waiting for you."

Two overpowering convictions were sweeping over Isabelle. She knew that nothing she could say would convince Nancy of her loss of memory; and she knew that in her forgotten past things had occurred which were so foreign to her present life that her imagination simply could not conceive them. She must squarely repudiate them or squarely accept them, and the jewels down on the floor at her feet had clenched that question. Repudiation was impossible. She had tried to run away with a man named Tom Carewe; she had had an accident which had interfered with her plans; and, finally, the lost jewels for which a detective was in search had been brought to her direct from Carewe, to whom she had confided them. She wished eagerly that she might glean more definite facts regarding her interrupted flight, but she shrank from questioning Nancy.

For the moment she was too concentrated on the discovery of her past and forgotten perfidy—that was how she regarded it—to realize the exact place the jewels occupied in her dilemma. Nancy bore down upon Isabelle's already distraught mind with a repetition of her warning. She rose and prepared to depart.

"Well, Bella," she said firmly, as she fastened her furs, "*find* those jewels, or your dear John will find something else.

I'll tell poor old Tom just what tack you're taking—even with me, and when you're sufficiently recovered to spread your wings for flight, just let me know—as you *didn't* before, and I'll take you to the boat myself and pick up the pieces if anything happens to you, and turn them over to Tom. He came back, by the way, pretty sore at the way he supposed you'd cut loose from him at the last minute, but now he's insane to see you and ask your forgiveness for doubting you. Poor lad! I wonder how he'll take this *new* blow. Do take pity on him, Bella, and recover your memory as soon as convenient. And I'll not stop for tea, thank you, to-day. Your devoted John might turn up and I don't want to see him."

With which parting shaft Nancy kissed Isabelle lightly on the cheek and departed.

Then came to Isabelle positive panic regarding the jewels. She shrank from the active *deceit* suggested by Nancy. She knew no special designer and she feared that John would later discover on what day the stones had been taken for resetting. She envisioned the dangerous possibilities if Elkins should pursue the case further, and she formulated vague reasons with which to approach John in asking him to dismiss the services of the detective.

She stood when Nancy had left her, pale and harassed, her eyes on the leather box which reposed on the floor. Suddenly there came a light tap on her door. She knew by its very lightness that it was John and she knew that he would not turn the handle until she called to him. With a movement almost as swift as thought, she darted to the box, seized it, and thrust it into her closet. Almost panting, she ran to her dressing room and from its doorway faintly called to him to come in. Thus did chance assume the responsibility for initial concealment both of the jewels and of the truth.

John kissed her with eager solicitude because she was very pale and seemed nervous and worried.

"Not fretting about those jewels, dearest, are you?" he asked with unconscious irony.

She shook her head, not trusting herself to speak.

"I came up to tell you, dear, that Elkins telephoned me this morning to make an appointment to meet me here this afternoon. He'll be here in a few minutes. I hope he has good news for us."

A sudden fear possessed Isabelle and she trembled.

"Oh, John, *please*, I beg of you, don't let that man pursue the matter any further. I would rather lose them than—than have any publicity or make trouble for—for Marie or any one else. I *hate* the whole thing! *Please* drop it! Tell him so this afternoon."

John was puzzled by her attitude, but he attributed it to the condition of her nerves, and decided quickly to humor her.

"All right, dearest. If he's found out nothing more, I'll tell him I've made up my mind to let the matter drop."

Her sigh of relief was so genuine that John made a mental reservation to ignore the question of the jewels until he could bring her definite news about them.

CHAPTER XIII.

On her return home, Nancy telephoned to Tom at his club, where he had agreed to wait for a message from her. She summoned him with what she thought was marvelously controlled excitement, and refused to say a word over the telephone except that he must come to see her at once. Poor Tom received a vague and disturbing impression that something was amiss with Isabelle, and he hurried to Nancy's home inwardly cursing the inconsistency of women, which makes them voluble

when one might wish them tongue-tied, and uncommunicative at decidedly the wrong moments. He greeted Nancy with an impatient scowl, but before he could express his anxiety, aroused by her brief telephone parley, she seized his arm and drew him into the room. Her eyes were very bright and her lips quivered into a widening smile.

"Oh, Tom," she began excitedly, "what *do* you think Bella's up to? My dear, she's conveniently forgotten all about starting to run away with you! That is, she *says* she has!" Nancy stopped breathless and watched for the effect on Tom of her startling news.

He stared at her in silence for a second.

"Just what," he finally brought out slowly, "do you mean?"

Nancy made an impatient gesture and threw herself on the lounge.

"Exactly what I say, Tom. Sit down and I'll give you all the details."

More dazed than anxious, Tom sat beside her. He was too preoccupied to light a cigarette.

"Her statement to me is that she had concussion of the brain, and has lost her *memory*."

"Good heavens!" Tom bent toward Nancy and his eyes were dark with excitement. "You mean—forgotten her past—what they call loss of identity?"

Nancy gave a scornful laugh.

"That's what *she says*, but you're surely not such a fool as to *believe* it!"

The danger of being a fool did not distract Tom from his deep perturbation.

"Such things do happen," he said quietly. "I've read of lots of cases. And sometimes they never recover their memory," he added miserably. "Good God! That *would* be tough!"

Nancy was as amazed as she was scornful of his credulity.

"Tom, what on earth's the matter with you? Isabelle hasn't lost her memory any more than I have! She's

simply the cleverest little faker—strategist would sound more flattering—I ever heard of!"

"But what would be her object in pretending she'd forgotten—*me*?"

"Why, you poor, foolish dear!"—Nancy tried to be patient—"can't you see that she's in a false position, and she's chosen this inspired way of making things easier for herself?"

"I suppose you mean that as she was virtually thrown back upon Harding by her accident, she thinks it best to put up a certain bluff with him for the present, until she's quite well again."

"Of course."

"But why go the length of telling him she's lost her memory? There's no reason to suppose he'd find out about her plan to go away with me until—well, until she should feel inclined to do the same thing again?"

"Things get out. It's more than likely John would find out *some* time."

"But, good heavens!" said Tom impatiently. "Bella was game to run off, and preferred that method of escape from her life with Harding. What is she afraid of now?"

"Why, you big goose! There's a slight difference, isn't there, between getting away with a risky undertaking and being caught with the goods, so to speak?"

Tom unhappily meditated this, then he said:

"Granted that she's using this invention regarding her memory to disarm Harding, no matter what he finds out, I can't for the life of me see why she has to lie to you and to me."

"My dear, she can't do *anything* where you are concerned, just now. In the first place, she took this line with John, evidently, when she supposed that you had gone to Italy, and that she couldn't get into communication with you. And to-day, when I sprang my news on her about your return, I suppose she decided to let things go on

this way for a time, and, quite obviously, she doesn't quite trust me, and wouldn't confide in me."

"It doesn't sound like Isabelle," Tom summed up doubtfully. "She's always truthful and straightforward. I don't know which is hardest to swallow—the fact that she's capable of such duplicity or the alternative of loss of memory. What did she say to you? Tell me all you can remember."

Nancy gave him a detailed account of her conversation with Isabelle, and when she reached the point in the interview where Isabelle accepted her jewels under protest, Nancy suddenly remembered about Elkins and his part in the story.

"And, oh, Tom," she began eagerly, "there's another complication. It seems John discovered the disappearance of some of her jewelry a short time ago. That is unexpected back-fire, isn't it?" Nancy interpolated, when Tom threw her a startled glance. "Well, I dare say, come to think of it, she lost her memory just the moment she saw the difficulty of making any convincing explanation regarding her jewels. To have John find out her interrupted scheme of running away with you would have been bad enough, but to have him discover that you had decamped with her jewelry would have been a bit thick. I can see just what she was up against."

"And I can see that the dear girl realized the devil of a position it would have put *me* in. She's always such a damned good little sport that she probably made up her mind to take the only tack she could, and stick to it until her health would be entirely recovered and until I could get back to New York. By Jove, I appreciate her loyalty!" ended Tom with tender enthusiasm.

"Yes," eagerly agreed Nancy, "and I suppose she's had to do so much acting and lying for John's benefit that she lost her nerve with me this morning

and stuck to her remarkable fairy story. But listen, Tom. There's something more. John put the matter of the lost jewels into the hands of a detective, and he's very busy just at present—the detective, I mean—trying to find the thief!" Nancy finished with a hysterical little laugh.

"Good heavens!" Tom saw nothing to laugh at in this development of an already sufficiently complex situation. "That's pretty serious, Nancy. What's happened so far, do you know?"

"I know one thing that's happened. The detective, by name Elkins, came to see me the other day with the avowed purpose of asking me for information regarding Marie Bédon, Isabelle's former maid. I didn't get the connection until Isabelle told me this morning that he was employed to trace her jewels. But the thing that interests me most is that just before he left here he asked me two impertinent questions about you. Wanted to know when you had left New York, and deliberately asked if you weren't an intimate friend of the Hardings. Of course I paid no attention to either of his questions, but in the new light I have now I can surmise that the real object of his call was to pump me about you."

"Upon my word!" Tom stared at her with a worried frown. "What on earth could he have heard to make him drag me into the thing?"

"There's no telling," said Nancy thoughtfully. "At any rate, I told Bella about his call and put her on her guard. I advised her to get busy and find those jewels as soon as possible. I left them with her, of course. She pretended ignorance of their very existence, but she took them all the same. I suggested that she recall having left them with some designer, and that she hurry and get them and have Elkins taken off the case immediately."

"Well, I'll be damned if I know what to do!" said Tom helplessly.

"There's nothing for you to do at present. When Bella decides to come out of her trance she'll let us both know, you may be sure. In the meantime, try not to be too miserable, Tom, dear. Oh, by the way," she laughed, "I forgot to tell you that on Bella's dressing table there's a large photograph of John, if you please, and *yours* is conspicuous by its absence."

"She seems to be more consistent than your charming sex has the habit of being," said Tom with slight bitterness.

"Never mind, old man. I'll stand by you."

As Tom rose to go, a sudden suspicion came to him.

"Suppose," he said somberly, "that she has lost her memory, and suppose that when—or if—she recovers her memory, she should find she prefers Harding to me."

Nancy laughed at him.

"If she has lost her memory, you'll have plenty of time in which to construct a new scheme of things for yourself. She might never recover, and if she does, you may be sure she'll be the same old Bella who loved you with all your faults and was bored by John's superiority. So don't despair."

"You're a brick, Nancy, and you're consoling. But damn it all! I wish to God I hadn't suggested that each of us go to the steamer alone that day, and to meet casually afterward. I got on board pretty late and, as I told you this morning, supposed Isabelle had reneged on her promise when I found she wasn't on board. Frankly, I was too upset and unhappy to give a thought to her jewel box until it was too late to go ashore even if I wanted to. Afterward, when I saw things from all sides, I came back, of course. But if I'd only taken her to the steamer she would never have had her accident."

"Well, all you can do now, Tom, is to sit tight." With which parting advice Nancy bade him good-by.

Elkins arrived promptly at five o'clock and Simpson showed him to the library. He had decided to depend upon his wits to smooth the rough corners of his story, and to soften as much as possible the effect of their contact with Mr. Harding's sensibilities.

Almost immediately John's tall figure appeared in the doorway. He came forward with outstretched hand.

"Good news, I hope, although you left me somewhat in the dark when you telephoned." John offered Elkins a cigar and indicated a chair.

"Yes," Elkins said slowly, lighting the cigar with deliberation. "I have some news for you, Mr. Harding."

John leaned forward eagerly.

"Have you any trace of the jewels?"

Elkins hesitated, then he said evasively:

"I haven't the slightest doubt of being able to find them ultimately, Mr. Harding."

The moment had come which he so dreaded, but he squared his shoulders and set about the task before him with no apparent hesitation.

"In the first place, as you know, I suspected that some member of your household might have had something to do with the theft of the jewels, and as Marie Bédon had apparently left the house the very morning of your wife's accident under rather mysterious circumstances, my suspicions naturally centered on her."

"I can quite understand that, Mr. Elkins. I was convinced myself at first that she was guilty."

"After the interview here in your house," Elkins resumed, "we subjected her to a very searching cross-examination and succeeded in corroborating her statements afterward. As far as we were able to determine, the girl eventually told the truth, although," he smiled grimly, "we had to use a good deal of pressure before she consented to do so.

I may add that she succeeded in clearing herself of all suspicion."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Elkins, for both Mrs. Harding and myself have become convinced of her absolute innocence."

After a short interval he asked:

"Then she was unable to give you any information about the jewels?"

Elkins stirred uneasily.

"Well, she threw some light on the subject. You see, knowing that Mrs. Harding could remember nothing about the matter, we questioned the girl rather minutely, and in the end established the fact that when your wife left the house that morning she carried her jewel case with her."

John looked up quickly.

"How did Marie know that?"

"She states, and I have every reason to believe that she is telling the truth, that she accompanied Mrs. Harding to the dressmaker's and saw the jewel case in her hands."

"But that is very queer," John looked perplexed, "for I am quite sure she denied that Mrs. Harding took it with her when you questioned her here on the subject."

"She lied on that occasion, Mr. Harding. I have already told you that we had to use a certain amount of force before we got at the real truth."

"But why," John persisted, "if she were innocent, why did she attempt to deceive you about so trivial a detail?"

Elkins shrugged his shoulders and did not reply.

After a moment John continued:

"Did you ask Marie if she had any idea where my wife was taking the jewels?"

"Yes, I asked her in regard to your wife's destination, but beyond the fact that Mrs. Harding was going out of town, we could get nothing further out of her on the subject."

The color faded from John's face

and his hands clutched the arms of his chair.

"Out of town," he repeated vaguely.

He sank in his chair as if he had been struck. The old, perplexing question as to Isabelle's destination on the day of her accident had, he supposed, been satisfactorily answered. Now, however, it arose from the past to assail him and found him unprepared.

Elkins meanwhile maintained a moody silence. He realized that the information he had conveyed to John had been a severe blow—how severe he had no idea—and he shrank inwardly when he tried to estimate what the effect would be on this man when he should add certain details of the miserable story, which he knew he would be compelled to before the interview could be brought to a close.

For a while John sat motionless, with his hands shading his eyes. Then he aroused himself and lifted his head. His face was drawn and white and seemed to be already marked with new lines of suffering.

"I do not quite understand, Mr. Elkins. Marie must have jumped to conclusions like the rest of us." His face brightened with his last words, but clouded again as he interpreted the expression in Elkins' eyes, wider open now than usual. "But how did she know that my wife was going on a journey? I wish you would be perfectly frank and tell me what you know about it." There was a note of appeal in his voice which shook Elkins' resolution, but he nerved himself to answer.

"Marie informed us that Mrs. Harding told her that she was going out of town."

John jumped excitedly to his feet.

"It's a damned lie!" he exclaimed with fierce intensity. "It's a scheme on the part of that lying little minx, Marie, to injure my wife. I never trusted that girl—never; and all that has transpired proves that my intui-

tion was correct. I won't have it, Mr. Elkins! I won't allow you nor any one else to entertain the thought that my wife would deliberately plan to leave my house and start on a journey without my knowledge and unqualified approval."

This unexpected outburst of passion took Elkins by surprise, and filled him with something like dismay. He had come to the house prepared for a stormy interview, but when he ventured the remark about the journey he had believed himself to be still treading on solid ground. Instead, he had struck an overstrung chord in John's memory and an explosion had followed. Now he could think of nothing to say which would improve matters, so he kept silent.

John strode nervously about the room, but presently he returned to his chair and sat down. When he finally spoke, Elkins again experienced a sense of surprise, for his voice, though a trifle shaky, was quiet and self-contained.

"You must pardon me, Mr. Elkins, for I am not quite myself. I've been laboring under a severe mental strain ever since Mrs. Harding was injured, and I suppose my nerves are rather ragged in consequence."

It was the most perfect exhibition of self-control that Elkins had ever witnessed; the lightninglike transition of a human being torn by passion, into the calm, conventional exterior of the man of the world. It compelled his admiration and also his regret that so fine a man should be so humiliated. His duty had become even more distasteful than before.

"It's all right, Mr. Harding," was his good-humored reply. "I understand perfectly how you feel. I regret exceedingly the necessity which compels me to place you in possession of certain facts which I have unearthed and which I am sure will cause you distress. But I have no other alternative. I feel

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that I should pursue the case no further unless authorized by you to do so."

John glanced at him sharply. Something intangible in Elkins' words gripped his heart like a vise. He wondered what was going on behind the impassive mask which faced him. Had the interview new terrors in store for him?

"What is your conclusion, then? That the jewels were stolen from her on the street?"

Elkins again stirred uneasily.

"I have thought of that, Mr. Harding, and I must admit that I have considered it among the possibilities. But first we must assume that Mrs. Harding had some definite purpose in taking the jewels with her that morning. I have succeeded in tracing her movements almost to the time of the accident, and I do not believe she had them with her when it occurred."

"This information you obtained, no doubt, from Marie."

"To a certain extent, yes."

"Then Marie did not leave her mistress at the dressmaker's?"

"No, Mr. Harding, she did not." The answer was abrupt and for a moment the two men looked steadily at one another. Elkins was the first to glance aside.

"Then where does she claim that my wife went?"

"Marie says," Elkins spoke slowly, "that she accompanied Mrs. Harding to an apartment house on East Fifty-seventh Street and left her there."

"An apartment house on East Fifty-seventh Street," John repeated in a puzzled tone. Who of Isabelle's friends lived in an apartment house on East Fifty-seventh Street? The question was unspoken and his brow furrowed into deep lines in the effort to answer it. His mind flew back to that night when he had made his last desperate attempt to reclaim his wife's affection. Then, in a flash, the curtain of memory

lifted and from his subconscious mind a man's name leaped into his understanding. His white face grew ashy and a dull flame smoldered in his dark eyes. When he spoke again Elkins gave a start, for his voice did not sound natural; it was harsh and guttural and deadly cold.

"I presume you have verified this girl's statements?"

Elkins braced himself for the ordeal. The end was near and he faced it with a stoical determination to do his duty at no matter what cost.

"Yes, Mr. Harding, I have verified them. I have corroborated the statements of the maid in every particular. Had Mrs. Harding been able to recall the events of that day, this would not have been necessary. As she could remember nothing, I was left groping about in the dark, and it is to my deep regret that in so doing I brought to light certain facts of which I should have preferred to remain in ignorance."

John sat rigid and silent.

"There is some doubt," Elkins resumed, "as to the hour when she left the apartment house and as to what she carried with her at the time. Marie's assertion that she entered this house was confirmed by the elevator boy, who remembered perfectly that a heavily veiled woman, accompanied by a maid, did come there that morning and that the porter took her steamer trunk as well as her suit case upstairs."

John shrank back, every muscle trembling.

"Then you believe that my wife——"

The sentence was never finished, for suddenly a very human rage possessed him. He sprang to his feet and with one stride towered over Elkins.

"Damn you!" he cried. "Do you think I am going to sit here and listen to any more of your infamous lies? Have you so little regard for a woman's reputation that you would wreck it for

the sake of your accursed theories?" His hands opened and shut convulsively and his eyes blazed with fury.

Elkins rose slowly to his feet.

"I have told you no lies, Mr. Harding. I would have spared you this if possible. I received instructions from you to pursue this investigation and I have done so to the best of my ability."

John's clenched fist came smashing down on the table with a force which upset the lamp and sent it crashing to the floor.

"This investigation, as you call it, ceases right here. Do you understand? I've had enough of it—too much of it, by God! No power on earth could induce me to move a finger in the matter again."

Staggering, he turned blindly and sank into a chair.

"My God! My God!" he moaned, as he buried his face in his hands.

Elkins stood silently watching him for a moment. There was no trace of resentment in his steady eyes, only a great compassion for this man who had traveled so far into the desert of human misery, and whom he longed to help, but could not.

"Mr. Harding," he spoke very gently, "my principal reason in coming here to-day was to find out whether it was your desire that this matter should be pursued further. I have only done my duty, acting entirely in your interest; paid by you to do so. It was impossible for me to divine what would be the outcome of my efforts. Had I known where they would lead me, you may be sure I would never have touched the case. It is your desire that the investigation should cease—well and good, it shall be as you wish."

For a full minute he waited, but no reply came. Save for an occasional convulsive movement, the huddled form of the man in the great chair gave no sign. Then, with a final glance full of pity, Elkins turned and left him.

CHAPTER XIV.

The growth of a strong soul may be measured by its throbs of anguish. John Harding's spirit soared finally above the bitterness which threatened to engulf him during the long hour of silent contemplation of his misery and disillusionment.

One supreme, unalterable fact usurped the foremost place in his consciousness: his wife—his adored and trusted wife—had deliberately planned to leave him for the sake of another man.

Fire had been put to the old racking, tormenting doubts which had followed her accident and all its unexplained mysteries; and the flame from this fire illumined in a flash all the months and even years which stretched behind.

The information gleaned from Elkins was meager, but it was more than enough to complete the story whose first vague details had suggested themselves merely as remote possibilities in John's unspoken and easily quenched suspicions on the day of the accident—suspicions which had actually persisted, unrecognized and unacknowledged, until the day of the interview with Marie Bédon.

That Isabelle's intended elopement with Carewe had been frustrated by the accident he did not question; no thought of a possible change of heart in her, even occurred to him. He accepted her unfaithfulness as an elemental and unchangeable factor in the situation. That a trick of fate had thrown her back upon his love and protection seemed, at this point of his reasoning, merely an inconsequent detail in the great sum of things; it had not yet assumed its true relation to events. His sense of values was, for the moment, blunted. He retained, however, a poignant recollection of all that his wife had meant to him since her return to consciousness.

He stopped suddenly in his restless pacing of the room, and picked up a large picture of her which stood in a frame on his table. It had been taken, at his urgent request, soon after her recovery, by a photographic artist recently come to New York from San Francisco. It was in semiprofile and the beautiful lines from throat to brow stood out in delicate relief against the soft aureole of her hair, which blended with the light grays of the background. Her shoulders were draped and she wore no jewels. The photograph was softly blurred and indistinct, but the eyes were lighted by an inward torch of whose essence even John knew nothing; the lips were curved in a very faint, very sad smile which struck him anew as he gazed at the picture.

He strode to his desk and seized another photograph of her taken two years before. It was in conventional décolleté and lacked the artistic qualities of the later portrait. But the greatest contrast lay in the expression of the two faces. In the eyes of this earlier picture lurked a semihumorous, semi-mocking appraisal of life and its many jests. The lines of the mouth were not precisely hard, but they indicated a certain definite acceptance of realities as opposed to the ideal. As John studied the two likenesses, the face in the more recent photograph seemed to him almost transfigured by some thought or emotion which had forced its way from its hidden recess out through its shell of bone and flesh.

A sudden realization seized him of the change which had taken place in Isabelle. He dropped the two pictures on his desk, breaking the glass in one of the frames; but he paid no heed and walked out of the room and down the stairs. In the hall he caught up his hat and coat, and a moment later left the house.

When Isabelle came downstairs at six o'clock, she was surprised to find that

John was not in. From Simpson she learned that a man had called to see her husband at about five o'clock. Mr. Harding had not rung for him, the butler informed her, and he did not know when the visitor had left.

"Did Mr. Harding leave no message?" she asked in surprise.

"No, madam; I have not seen Mr. Harding since I told him that a visitor was waiting to see him in the library."

Isabelle dressed for dinner and at seven o'clock she went to John's library to wait for him. To her astonishment, she discovered the remains of the broken lamp scattered over the table and the floor. She rang for Simpson and asked him if he knew anything about it. The butler's usually impassive face wrinkled into puzzled concern as he assured his mistress that he knew nothing whatever about the matter, but that he was sure, yes, quite sure, that when he had ushered Mr. Harding's caller into the room the lamp was not broken.

"Oh, nonsense, Simpson! Who could have broken it since then?" she asked with a smile. "One of the maids must have broken it this morning and forgotten to report it or to pick it up."

"Shall I call Anna? She will be able to tell madam."

"Oh, no!" she hastily exclaimed, with a desire to avoid even the slightest unpleasantness for her servants at the close of their day of work. "Say nothing to the maids about it to-night, please, Simpson. I will attend to it in the morning. Just pick up the pieces and throw them away. Oh, and tell Martha I shall wait dinner for Mr. Harding."

At a quarter after eight she found herself alternating restlessly between a book she tried to read and one of the windows, through which she peered at intervals, seeking in the obscurity of the street below the approaching form of her husband.

Twice she was on the point of calling up one or two of the clubs to inquire if he were there; each time she refrained, held by an instinctive shrinking from the species of espionage which impels women to pursue, through the hapless telephone, the straying footsteps of their absent lords. If John were not at home, it must be for some good and sufficient reason, and when he could do so he would return. Vaguely she realized that this process of reasoning would not be valid in the cases of many husbands, but she felt that her knowledge of John justified all her confidence in him.

Then swiftly came to her another reflection. How could she tell what he might or might not have done prior to her accident? After all, that was not long ago, and what was a short interval compared to the years which had gone before? His recent solicitude for her health might have impelled a change in the routine of his life, and change breeds change.

In one of her restless trips between chair and window her quick eye caught the confused *mêlée* of pictures and frames on John's desk. She took them up wonderingly. Fragments of glass fell from one of the frames. Mechanically she picked the remaining pieces of glass from the frame and gathering those which lay on the desk she dropped them together into the wastebasket. She placed the frame with its uncovered photograph on the table and returned the other to its place on the desk. All the while she wondered why the maid, having broken the glass, had not disposed of it, instead of leaving it in untidy confusion on the desk; and how in the world she had been so careless as to break two articles in one morning. Isabelle was at loss to understand.

No suspicion of the truth came to her in regard to John's interview with Elkins. She thought of it merely with confident relief that this sinister affair

of a detective presumably was at an end. The unrelated adverse facts of her life, the startling revelations forced upon her by Nancy, and her inability to adjust her mind to a situation in which she seemed to move as in a dream, prevented her from performing the sometimes difficult trick of adding two and two with normal and expected results.

Her natural power of concentration, will power, made it possible for her to eliminate from her thoughts the unwelcome factor of the jewel box concealed in her closet. She had determined not to follow Nancy's suggestion that she take her jewels to some designer, and certainly she would not confide to John that they had been returned to her by a man with whom she had attempted to elope. It would be grotesquely absurd to narrate secondhand, incriminating facts against herself, of which she had no consciousness. If she must ever tell John the truth, it would only be when she should recover full memory of her past. In the meantime she would drift on the tide of her happiness with her husband. Intuitively she knew that if only out of friendship for this man, Tom Carewe, Nancy would not betray her; and Elkins was no longer a menace.

By a quarter to nine she was nervous and unstrung and harassed by vague fears. Shortly after nine Simpson appeared to say that Mr. Harding had just telephoned that he had been unexpectedly detained by an important matter; that he had expected to be able to return and for that reason had not telephoned sooner. He hoped that Mrs. Harding had not waited dinner for him and requested her not to sit up for him as he would not be home until very late.

The relief from her suspense was immeasurable and her faith in the devotion and honesty of her husband was so absolute that no lurking doubts remained to torment her as they torment so many women who are either small-

minded themselves, or whose husbands, however kind and loving, fail to inspire a perfect confidence in their integrity.

She went downstairs and ate her dinner. The beef was overdone and the cook—so Simpson respectfully intimated—was not in the best of humors, but Isabelle only smiled, caring little for such trivialities now that she knew John was safe from harm. She read until about eleven; then she went to bed and slept better than she had slept for weeks.

When John left the house he walked into the park, heeding neither direction nor the hour, which was nearly six. He walked with bent head, unaware of the occasional loiterer who passed him in the gloom. On and on he walked for two hours, unmindful of time or distance, unconscious of fatigue, thinking, always thinking, and gradually evolving from the chaos of his emotions a definite resolve. If Isabelle had actually forgotten the incidents which preceded her accident, forgotten, in fact, the whole episode of her intended elopement, then he would pray for courage to forget it also, as far, at least, as his conduct toward her was concerned. But first he must know, he must discover by one means or another, if she really had forgotten.

When he looked at his watch by the small flame of his cigar lighter, it was eight o'clock. He suddenly felt tired and his head ached abominably. Of food he did not once think, not even to wonder whether Isabelle would await his return before eating her dinner. His mind was turbulent or he would have been quick to consider his wife's comfort and to have avoided any chance of her delaying her meal or worrying over his absence, by sending her some message. He had gone far beyond the minor considerations of life and for the time being was utterly indifferent to them.

As he returned his watch to his waistcoat pocket, he became conscious of an intense desire to see his old friend, Doctor Bowyer. Scorched one moment by the certainty as to what that fateful day of the accident had held in store for him, torn by doubt the next as to the sincerity of his wife's present attitude toward him, in a half-dazed and helpless groping after the truth, he turned like a child to the friend and counselor of his boyhood. He walked to the street, called a taxicab, and drove to Gramercy Park.

At Doctor Bowyer's old-fashioned residence he was told by Sam, the colored manservant, who opened the door, that the doctor had gone out, but would return in half an hour.

Samuel had been with his master for many years. Since John's childhood Sam had known and loved him, and through his large, steel-rimmed spectacles his shrewd old eyes took anxious note of the haggard look on John's face. He insisted upon his waiting for the doctor's return and led the way to the shabby, homely little room at the rear of the house, which Doctor Bowyer called his den. Then, with the solicitude of his race and generation for those they reverence, he went straight to the doctor's wine closet and brought a glass of port and a biscuit.

The sight of food was unendurable, but to please the old man John gulped down the wine and thanked him, with the shadow of his old smile. The pain in his head was severe and, as he leaned back in the worn armchair, he held his hand against his forehead. The old darky stood before him in troubled uncertainty. Then timidly he ventured:

"Mars John, Miss Sally's upstairs, an' ef it's de headache dat's bother'n yo', she suttinly kin cure it. W'en ma ole head gits ter achin' I goes ter her an' gits some little w'ite pills. I'll git some fer yo', Mars John, ef yo' say so."

John shook his head.

"No, Sam, don't trouble Mrs. Bowyer. I—I just want to wait here quietly until the doctor comes. I would rather not see Mrs. Bowyer, Sam, if you can manage it."

"Dat's all right, suh. I'll see dat yo' ain't 'sturbed twell Mars Raymond done come."

John sat very still with closed eyes; his brain had ceased all active work from sheer exhaustion; only now and again his heart gave a dull throb as some peremptory thought rushed unbidden to arouse his half-dormant faculties.

When Doctor Bowyer returned, shortly before nine, old Sam had a rapid, whispered conference with him in the hall, and he came directly to his study.

"Well, John, my boy, glad to see you!" was his cheerful greeting.

"Are you particularly busy to-night, doctor? If you are, I'll just sit here, if you don't mind, and wait until you have finished." John's tone was colorless, but his face looked less jaded than when he had first entered the house.

"Bless your heart! I'm always particularly busy, but never too busy to talk to you. Try one of these," he added, handing John a long, flat, very ornate cigar box. "Gift from a G. P., straight from Havana; must have cost a dollar apiece. They're wonders!"

John shook his head.

"They're awfully fine, I know, but I'll not smoke if you don't mind."

"Well, I declare! I never knew you to refuse a good cigar before. What's the trouble?"

"To tell you the truth, I've got a frightful headache, doctor, and I don't think smoking will improve it."

"Hardly. Did you have it before dinner?"

John hesitated.

"I—I haven't dined."

"Haven't dined? Mercy on us!"

The doctor jumped up and rang the bell.

"Don't send for anything, doctor. I don't want it. I couldn't eat it."

Doctor Bowyer ignored his protests and when Sam appeared he gave him an order in a low tone. Then he went into his office and returned with a glass of water and a slip of paper containing a white powder.

"Take this, John. Do as I tell you, boy." This with some firmness, as John told him that he never took medicine.

But he swallowed it meekly enough and then leaned his head against the crocheted antimacassar on the back of the chair. He watched his friend's gloating delight as he slowly tore the tinfoil wrapper from his cigar, cut off the end, lit it, and took his first delicious, leisurely puff, with a beatific expression on his kindly old face.

But if Doctor Bowyer appeared engrossed in his cigar, it gave him an opportunity to study John from under half-closed lids. What ailed the boy, he wondered.

Sam brought presently, on a silver tray, a plate of steaming soup, bread, and a glass of wine.

"Some of Jennie's gumbo soup you're so fond of," the doctor remarked.

With the taste of the delicious Southern dish, John's normal appetite asserted itself, and when Sam reappeared with a plate of fried chicken and plantain cooked in claret, he ate and enjoyed it like a boy.

"Now you'll be able to smoke, and you know you can't talk freely if you're not smoking."

John smiled and made no further demur.

"Feeling better now?" the doctor asked presently.

"Yes. At any rate, my inner man is more content and that powder has worked wonders with my head."

"How is Isabelle?" The question

came abruptly and John started violently. Then his face grew white. He jumped to his feet and walked to the little table which held the telephone. He rang up his house and gave Simpson the message which so relieved Isabelle's anxiety. Then he returned slowly to his chair.

The doctor was disturbed and puzzled. What in Heaven's name had occurred to upset John, and why had he turned pale at the mention of his wife's name?

Not a word was spoken for a quarter of an hour. Doctor Bowyer had picked up a medical journal and was glancing unseeing through its pages. John sat quietly smoking and looking into space. Finally:

"Doctor, I need your help." His tone was sharp and dry.

The doctor looked at him quickly over his glasses; then he shut the magazine.

"You can always count on my help, John."

"I know it; that's why I came to-night."

Again a silence, and then abruptly:

"Doctor, I can't stand this uncertainty any longer. I can't endure it."

"What uncertainty?" The doctor spoke sharply.

"About Isabelle's loss of memory."

"Well, what about it? You mean whether she'll ever recover her memory completely or not?"

"No; at least that's not what's worrying me at present. It's—it's whether"—his voice dropped and his hand clenched the arm of the chair—"it's whether she's forgotten more than I think she has or less—whether she really has forgotten *anything*." He put sudden, sharp emphasis on the last word.

"My heavens, John! Of course she's forgotten some things. How can you question it? We discovered that the very first hour of her return to consciousness."

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"Yes, but since then. She may have recalled things and not—not told me so."

"What would be her object, for pity's sake?"

John's face quivered and he looked quickly away.

"I can't go into the psychology of it; I don't want to. I just want facts. Won't you help me to find out?"

"How can I find out any better than you can?"

"As her physician, you can catechize her in a way I shouldn't care to do. If you'll make a point of it, I know you can find out exactly what state of mind she is really laboring under."

The doctor smoked in silence for some minutes. He knew that John was shaken by something far more cataclysmic than worry over the extent of Isabelle's loss of memory. Since John had elected to tell him only half the truth, he must do the best he could with it.

"Very well, John, I will do my best," he finally answered. "Ask Isabelle if she can spare me an hour to-morrow, say at two o'clock, and you meet me here at five. I'll do my best," he repeated, leaning forward and laying his hand affectionately on John's knee.

When John let himself into his house with his latchkey and softly closed the door behind him, he stood listening for a moment. Absolute stillness reigned. The house was in darkness except for the light in the lower hall and the gleam from the small hanging lamp at the head of the first flight of stairs.

CHAPTER XV.

Doctor Bowyer sat in the deep arm-chair which John had occupied the previous night. He sat very still except for the fingers of his thin, blue-veined hands, which beat a ceaseless tattoo on the arms of the chair. Over his gold-rimmed spectacles his dark, nearsighted

eyes, full now of a grave concern, gazed into the deepening shadows of the room. Sam's attempt to light the lamp had been checked by a brief, "Wait, Sam," in a tone of voice which the old negro had learned to associate with worried preoccupation.

In his thirty years of medical experience, he had never encountered anything as baffling as the circumstances in which he found himself inextricably involved.

In the past three weeks Doctor Bowyer had read everything he could find dealing with the strange phenomenon of loss of memory. Old medical books and journals dealt lightly with the subject, if at all, and the data he had found in modern books were meager and unsatisfactory. He had interviewed two of the famous alienists in the city. From these various sources of information he had arrived at two conclusions: no two cases on record were precisely alike, and medical science had as yet found no means of predicting the outcome in any specific case, however familiar its particular symptoms might be. It was this feeling of inadequacy to deal with an increasingly difficult situation which gave Doctor Bowyer a sense of helplessness and a growing irritation with himself and his profession.

Oh, yes, he ruminated, of course operations had been performed where injuries to the head had resulted in loss of memory, which had restored the brain to its normal function. But in other cases operation had disclosed no pressure of bone or other substance on the brain. In many cases complete return of memory had come suddenly, without any operation, and in as many others it had come gradually, through some process of nature unexplained by science.

As he had told John weeks ago, no alienist could confidently predict a return of memory in any given case, or,

in the event of its return, say whether it would be accompanied by forgetfulness of the intermediate period. Of cases where no return of memory had ever occurred, Doctor Bowyer was fully cognizant.

All these deductions had become as thin air since his talk with her that afternoon. The immediate outcome was a complete reversal of one, at least, of his theories; the others had assumed an added significance and menace. Her complete change of character formed a complex of so psychic a nature that it forbade analysis. He could only accept it as a fact known to science that loss of memory often brings about this strange metamorphosis, of a Jekyll into a Hyde, or the reverse. Perhaps John was right in his assumption that Isabelle's "submerged ego"—the better self that he had always believed in—had at last been given a chance to express itself. But Doctor Bowyer trembled to think what the consequences might be of return of memory. It might mean a return of the old Isabelle, who preferred Tom Carewe to John Harding.

By this time the objects in the room lay in deep shadow.

"Sam!" Doctor Bowyer called. And as the darky appeared in the doorway, "Light that lamp over there; no, not this big one—and bring me a whisky and soda. Master John will be here any minute. Show him in when he comes."

"Yes, Mars Raymond. Yo' suttinly looks like yo' needed a little 'freshment. Yo' looks mighty tired." And the faithful old servant lighted the lamp and then shuffled out to bring "'freshment" to his master.

John meanwhile was speeding northward, steering his car through the mazes of traffic, a portion of his brain busy with retrospection. That morning he had ad his first battle with himself in the campaign he had planned, when he had resisted the impulse to

breakfast earlier than usual and thus escape the ordeal of a tête-à-tête with his wife. His shrinking from even a casual encounter with her had been so intense that it made him wonder if his strength would be sufficient to meet the demands he knew would be made upon it.

Isabelle, whose senses were quickened by love, had felt a subtle something in John which eluded description. Women of her type, highly sensitized and responsive to brain vibrations of which women of coarser fiber remain mercifully ignorant, are many times propelled by their intuitions to some conclusion which their intellect refuses to consider seriously.

Thus it was with Isabelle, and John, in his turn, sensitive to the faintest shade of meaning in her expression or manner, became miserably conscious that for all his efforts to speak and act naturally he had conveyed to her a telepathic message which her heart had received and registered.

When Sam ushered him into the doctor's study John's face showed the worry and distress which had so puzzled his old friend the previous night.

"I'm sorry I'm late, but I couldn't help it, and I won't take the time for explanations."

"Never mind, John. You look tired, boy. Here, have a drink; I've just had one myself."

"Did you see Isabelle?" The question was asked in a tone which seemed to say, "Let's have it over with, whatever it is," but he was drawing water from a siphon and did not look at the doctor.

Doctor Bowyer replied slowly, looking straight at John and compelling his answering glance.

"I went at two to see her, as we agreed, and I had a long talk with her."

"Well?" John took one or two quick swallows of the whisky, then set the glass on the table.

"You'll accept my ultimatum regarding any point on which I have made up my mind?"

"Certainly."

"Well, my dear boy, first of all, prepare yourself for something which was practically a certainty with me weeks ago and which you must accept now without question or argument. Isabelle's lapse of memory is not partial, as you suppose, but total—*absolute*—do you understand?"

"What in Heaven's name do you mean?"

"I mean, John, that when she awoke to consciousness that afternoon of the accident, her mind was as completely a blank as to her identity as if she had never lived at all."

"I knew she did not recognize even me at first. I know that," John spoke excitedly, "but afterward she remembered me, and other things, too, as time went on."

"She did *not* remember you, either in the first hour or in any hour that followed."

"What do you mean?" John repeated his question in helpless confusion. "What do you mean by her not remembering me?" His voice broke on the last word.

"I mean exactly what I say. When she awoke to her immediate surroundings they were as new and strange to her as yours would be to you if you fell asleep this very minute and woke up in some desolate spot in Tibet of which you have never even seen a picture."

The doctor paused a moment to let this sink into the other man's understanding, but John said never a word. He sat with muscles relaxed and eyes, bright and burning, fixed on the doctor's face.

"She awoke," the older man continued, "not only to new or unrecognized surroundings, but to the presence of persons of whom she had no con-

scious knowledge. That she was the wife of a man named John Harding was one of her first and most simple discoveries. Her perception of your love for her and of the sort of man you are was, of course, more gradual, but none the less wonderful as a revelation. Of your past mutual relations, of her friends, of her very ego, she had no more remembrance than if she had died and been born again."

John still sat almost limp in his chair. His eyes looked vacant in their fixity, and if his face had been less strong and fine in mold, one would have said that it had become suddenly flaccid.

"Do you begin to understand, John?"

"I understand your words," he spoke haltingly, "but the deeper meaning back of them is still vague to me."

"Suppose you ask me a few questions. That will clear your brain."

"Well, first of all, how did you find out what you have just told me?"

"By the explicit avowal of a woman whom I knew to be telling me God's truth, assisted by my common sense and my knowledge of the pathological facts of the case."

"You would consider no possible motive for feigning a more complete forgetfulness of the past than actually exists?" As John spoke, the blood pounded at his temples and dyed his face a deep red, but he brought out his question without flinching.

"Motive, motive, *what* motive? Don't talk enigmas, John, or I shall lose patience. What *motive could* a woman have for acknowledging that she found herself in so trying and unusual a situation as confronted that poor girl when she understood her predicament?"

John realized that to make his question clear he would have to tell the doctor more than he wished to, and yet—My God! What were such delicacies of sentiment as compared to deeper issues! When he spoke again his voice was hard and compelling.

"Can you conceive a situation where a woman, having contemplated disloyalty to her husband and afterward regretting it, or being forced by circumstances to change her plans, might wish for the present at least to ignore her past impulses or intentions by insisting on forgetfulness of everything and everybody concerned with her past?"

"Oh!" The exclamation was full of understanding. "So that's what you're driving at! John, have you anything besides a perfervid imagination to blame for that notion?"

"I can't go into that." His answer was almost brusque.

"Answer my question, boy, or I wash my hands of this whole affair." The tone of authority strengthened John's hesitant impulse.

"Well, then, yes, there is something besides my imagination."

"Is it anything which gives you reason to doubt the perfect openness and sincerity of her conduct for the past few weeks?"

John hesitated.

"It is something which suggests the possibility of a motive for a lack of openness and sincerity."

"But it is nothing which has actually sprung from any recent occurrence. I mean by 'recent,' since her accident?"

"No." The monosyllable was emphatic.

"Then, for heaven's sake let's drop all speculation derived from anything you have found out or suspect regarding the past. I tell you"—the doctor slapped the arm of his chair—"I tell you, John, that girl is as unconscious of her past as you are of a previous incarnation. You've got to accept that fact to start with or you'll arrive nowhere."

"But why, then, in the name of Heaven, if she's forgotten every person and fact of her past life, does she remember her French, for example, and her music and books she has read and

plays she has seen. And she has discussed artists and their work with me with a familiarity impossible, it would seem to me, to acquire by recent reading."

"My dear John, those are questions no living alienist can answer, much less a humble practitioner like myself. They are among the unsolved riddles of human experience. We simply know it to be a fact that in many cases of loss of memory the language faculty remains unimpaired, which explains the ability to speak any language with which the patient happened to be familiar originally. Also, we know that in cases where all remembrance of incidents and persons associated with the past is destroyed, we still find the memory retaining vivid impressions absorbed from literary fiction. This would also apply, of course, to much acquired in the line of general education. As to the power of self-expression in some language formerly acquired, it would hold good as regards music. If a person does not forget how to talk or write what he has once learned to express in speech or by the written word, why should he forget the language of music? One phenomenon is no stranger or more inexplicable than the other."

John had listened intently, trying to grasp the other's full meaning.

"But another thing, doctor. She has referred to places she has been in. Does she remember them?"

"My dear fellow, she doesn't recall the actual experience of having been in any place under the sun. I gather that her power of imagery is not so completely paralyzed as is often the case, for she says she can see certain places and things and herself in relation to them, but only as images impressed on the subconscious mind."

The doctor leaned back wearily and wiped his handkerchief over his brow.

"Pour me a small drink, John. One is my usual modest allowance at this

hour of the day, but I think I need additional inspiration after all that talking. Finish your own drink; you need it."

John mechanically poured some whisky and soda into the doctor's glass; then he drank what remained in his own at one gulp.

"Has she forgotten every one she ever knew before—*every one*?" he repeated with slow emphasis.

The doctor glanced sharply at him.

"Damn it all, John! You try my patience. I tell you her mind is an absolute blank as regards facts and individuals. *Blank*—can't you understand? It isn't like you to be so confoundedly suspicious. I know exactly what's in your mind, so we might as well be frank. Now, mind you, John, Isabelle never used to care particularly for me, thought me old-fogy, I suppose, but lately we've understood one another capitally. Why, that dear girl actually cried the other day when she told me of the occurrence at Mrs. de Koven's dinner, and she asked me—actually asked me—who Tom Carewe is, and why people seemed to think she ought to know more about him than any one else. She said it had worried her horribly and she couldn't ask you about it."

"What did you tell her?" John's question was crisp.

"Tell her?" snapped the doctor. "I told her he was a young fool who had more good looks and money than common sense and discretion, and that he had been attentive to her at one time. She looked pathetically puzzled at that and asked me where he is now and if he is a friend of yours. I told her not a particular friend, but not to bother her little head about that."

"Why has she so consistently led me to believe that her lapse of memory was only partial?" John asked in an even tone.

"Because she saw from the very first day how it pained and worried you,

and she determined to spare you all she could by pretending to remember. She's been under a fearful strain and she's as plucky as she is sweet and good."

This, from his old friend whose admiration for Isabelle had never been anything but perfunctory, took John by surprise.

"So her embarrassment at Nancy de Koven's dinner was due solely to her inability to remember—that man?"

"Certainly! She told me how grateful she was for your attempt to shield her, and she said she knew you did not understand her need for your support, though she never dreamed, nor does she now, what you evidently supposed was the cause of her confusion."

John got up abruptly and walked over to the window.

"My Lord, my Lord!" he muttered half to himself. "What a situation! Where will it all end?"

"Look-a-here, John, she has no more recollection of that man than if he had never existed, and she loves you with all her heart. Isn't that enough for you? Damme, it ought to be enough for any man!" The kind old doctor's voice was gruff with emotion and he took off his spectacles and polished them vigorously.

John strode swiftly across the room and stood in front of him.

"And when Isabelle recovers her memory of the past—as I presume she will eventually—and her memory of old friendships—what then, tell me, what then?"

"You're a fool, John! Do you think she would ever want to return to any other life than the one she has been living lately with you?"

"Do you remember telling me that in some cases of brain concussion where the memory fails, the patient recovers complete recollection of the past, while forgetting the intermediate period of semiconsciousness?"

"Yes, yes, but what of it?"

"What of it?" His voice vibrated with rising passion. "Supposing she recovers her memory of the past and forgets this present she is now living?"

The doctor's head sank lower.

"I don't know, John," was all he managed finally to say. "I don't know, my boy, but I think, I believe"—he raised his head and his expression brightened—"I honestly believe that if she recovers her past, she will *never* forget her present. She is living too fully, too happily, and it *must* remain forever in her consciousness."

"Ah, you think, you believe, but you don't know—you don't know anything about it, and if she does forget the present interval, she'll swing back—back to *him*, I tell you!"

"I don't know, but for God's sake, brace up and take your medicine! It's no worse than it was before."

John stood with his hands behind his back, apparently sunk in abstraction. Then, finally:

"Did she tell you of the answer she gave me once when I asked her if she recalled a certain conversation we had the night before her accident?"

"Yes, she said she told you a deliberate lie because she dreaded the pain that any new evidence of weakness of memory in her seemed to cause you. She said her one object was to make you happy and spare you worry."

Doctor Bowyer moved restlessly.

"I'm sorry, John, tremendously sorry"—he threw his arm over the young man's shoulder—"for, I know what all this has meant to you. We made a mistake and that's all there is about it. She hasn't entirely recovered from the nervous shock of that accident, and it would take very little to upset her. Don't let her dream of your disappointment, and, above all, bury that other hatchet—do you hear? Bury it where it can never be dug up again!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.



The Two Lovers

By Rita Wellman

SEYMOUR took its art seriously. Art came to the town as a strange guest, one who would create vague longings and stir up forgotten dreams. Artists were ambassadors who took on the great one's inscrutability and power.

Seymour met Anya Merik at the station with wreaths of flowers and curious eyes. They were disappointed that she had no sick monkeys in sapphire collars, as the unforgettable singer had brought with her; but her tall presence, in its black, shimmering cloak, and the gypsy cook with a yellow headdress and brass rings in her ears, consoled them in their ideas of what a great artist should be. Her simplicity cooled them, however, and the fact that she had but three trunks made them wonder if she were such a great artist, after all.

Anya Merik passed among their numbers as a splendid ship sails by mean and messy little barges, serene and steady. Those who spoke to her received a gleaming, impersonal smile and the firm pressure of a cool, unyielding hand. No one seemed to notice the small, dull-black box which Anya Merik held close to her body. It was the instrument which set her forever above them. It was her key to the unknown. It was her master and her lover and her god. Her violin!

Dana Taylor saw it and spoke of it to his best friend.

"Look! That's her violin."

"The flowers on it make it look more than ever like a coffin," Van Doon said.

They walked down the road together, getting out of the way for the mayor's automobile, which was to take the vio-

linist to the cottage on the outskirts of the town where she was to belong to Seymour for four weeks.

Dana's aunt had gone to the conservatory with Miss Merik, Dana's mother proudly remembered, and Dana's mother was asked to come to tea. When the day came, Dana's mother was unable to go. She was ashamed to go in her old black gown, and the new one promised by the dressmaker had not been sent. A painful malady would have been born unflinchingly by this mother of five, but she could not endure the hurt of feeling shabby. She thrust a large, uncomfortable bunch of roses, hysterically bought, into her son's arms, and, after looking him over regretfully, sent him as her tribute to art.

"Dana walks baldly," she said to herself, as she watched him go down the road. "He always looks as if he had forgotten something and was wondering if he ought to turn back."

She sat a long time on her veranda, for summer had almost come, thinking of music and celebrity and of her son. The little cheer at the station had brought her a sound as of a sea which beat against unknown shores. To her, life had been all a matter of house—her father's house; then her husband's house, where every piece of furniture knew the feel of her small, energetic fingers, busy inside the polishing cloth; then her friends' houses, which she criticized and envied, and to which she gave far more attention than to the friends themselves. House was the rock on which the chance soil of her life had settled, and from it the exotic flowers of art had not been able to grow.

Dana's life had been all figures, she thought. As a boy he had been awakened most by the presence of figures. Now, as a student of engineering, figures were the most important thing in his life. He was always silent at home, with a small, black, shining notebook in his hand, in which he made perfectly formed numbers, so firmly that their impression went deep into the paper on the next page, as if they had been drawn with a piece of sharp steel.

He had only one friend in all Seymour, his mother thought sadly—Lloyd van Doon. No one liked Lloyd van Doon in Seymour.

"That is why my son likes him," Dana's mother thought. Van Doon was a Hollander who had come to teach physics at the university in one of the near-by towns. He had quarreled with the professors, and had left the university after much unpleasantness. At Dana's urging, he had taken a position as chief chemist in the chemical plant which was the largest industry in Seymour.

Dana's mother thought of Van Doon, of his great height, his brilliant green eyes, his politeness, which made her feel uncomfortable and small. She was a little woman with brown skin, and gray hair which streaked down from under her comb at the back in a sort of whisker. Whenever she was with Van Doon she felt browner than ever, and as if her back hair were more than ever untidy.

Unaccountably her thoughts left her son and his friend, and she thought of Miss Merik's big black hat. She had noticed it particularly. It was the kind of hat Seymour milliners did not make. It gave her a vague uneasiness, like Van Doon's eyes. It made her feel browner.

She had never been a vain or frivolous woman, yet she felt that clothes had a power of their own. She wondered how it felt to wear a hat like

that of Miss Merik. She thought of her dressmaker then, and of the promised gown, and with her accustomed energy she jumped from the rocking-chair and went quickly down the stairs. A moment later she started off down the road in the direction of the dressmaker's house.

Dana grew more and more uneasy about the burden of flowers he carried. He was not accustomed to carry flowers wrapped in conspicuous, waxy, violet-colored paper. He felt feminine and ridiculous. As he drew near the artist's house, his uneasiness increased. His hands grew cold and his body trembled. As he came to her stone gate, the weight of the flowers grew too much for him. With a guilty look behind, he dropped them quickly behind the hedge.

At the door he met Van Doon, his hair smoothed back, his shoes brightly polished.

"He looks like a European gentleman," was Dana's thought. The cool superiority was gone from Van Doon's eyes. Dana had never realized how good looking he was. He was glad that he had asked him for protection. His presence gave Dana courage.

"Shall we go in?"

"If you like."

Anya was sitting on a large couch before the bay window. They went forward hesitatingly across the bare, polished floor. Dana saw that her gown was white, that she wore red at her belt, that the room was large, that there were only the three of them there, that she wore a green ring, that one of her eyes was larger than the other.

Van Doon saw only himself. He watched his clumsy entrance. He seemed to himself a great, blond beast of the stone age. He saw this beast look about uncertainly at chintz-covered chairs, and almost fearfully at a hand. The room became all this great, blond beast and this hand. He tried to avoid

looking at it, but the hand persisted. He took it, and looked into the woman's eyes. He was a man who was honest with himself, and no human hand could frighten him. The touch of the hand shriveled everything into its proper proportions.

He saw that the woman had red at her waist, that the windows were open, that there were nasturtiums on the table before her, that her lips were red, that her nails were highly polished, that Dana looked brown and strange and suddenly entirely unfamiliar. He had never realized that Dana was so young. He felt almost sorry for something unprotectedly young in his friend.

The two men sat down, and there was a silence in which the woman, smiling as if at her own thoughts, sat waiting, swinging a long chain which hung about her neck.

"How do you like Seymour?" was Van Doon's unpromising beginning.

"It is like so many places I have been," she answered. "They all even smell the same. That is why I bring these things with me." She touched a silk cover thrown over the couch where she sat. "These have a smell you cannot manufacture. The smoke of incense burned long ago, and the dust of temples where sandalwood images have slowly crumbled into decay."

She said such things easily, as if they were rehearsed lines for a play. She had said this many times before about her Chinese embroideries. It had been original with her at the first. Natures which are really artistic are not ashamed of repetition. If a thing is once fresh and interesting, they argue, it will always be. The main thing is to be certain of one's audience.

She was amazing. She performed miracles with words and ideas, as astonishing as those of a Bengali sorcerer. Snakes coiled out of the baskets of her similes, and the inert came to life and moved to the music of her speech. She

gave herself no trouble to find out what pleased them, and then to become it, as lesser women do. She was lost in the art of being herself. She made them talk of themselves. She learned of Dana's hard studying to become an engineer. She learned of the quarrel at the university, which had caused Van Doon to leave it.

"They were too conservative," he said. "I have ideas." He seemed to expand under her smile. He talked of his great idea.

"It will be a wonderful thing for workers in metal. It will have the same effect of water at a temperature of a thousand degrees or more—it will melt even the hardest metal. Think of what that will mean! Without fire it will be possible to turn steel molten!"

Dana gave him a look of displeasure. It was bad taste to talk of steel. He could have done that himself, and, instead, he had talked of music, of which he knew nothing.

After tea they dared not stay longer. Once more they were walking on the road.

"What do you think of her?" Dana asked, looking up at Van Doon's large face, with its little green eyes staring thoughtfully ahead.

"I don't like her."

"Neither do I. She is stupid. All she can talk of is music. What is that? I don't see anything so wonderful about it."

"She acts."

"Yes, that's it. She is always playing-acting. Never natural a moment."

Dana was still sitting there beside her tea table. Everywhere he looked he saw chintz-covered chairs and those Chinese embroideries. A music, like a chant, was ringing in his ears—her voice. At home, where a moment before he had so longed to be, everything seemed suddenly distasteful to him. He had never noticed how brown his mother was. Her hair streaked down

Danae back behind her comb. Why had she never seen that before? Her voice and accent annoyed him. All at once he was no longer related to her. She talked to him eagerly of Miss Merik.

"What is she like?"

"I don't know—artificial."

His mother drew in her lips and nodded.

"What can you expect? What did you talk about?"

"Oh, everything. She has been all over the world."

"Then you talked about foreign countries?"

"No, no, mother. About music, about things. I don't know!"

"Did she play for you?"

"Play for us!"

"Why not? She knew your aunt."

All that night Dana was awake. He was still taking tea. Unlike in the day, it was he now who said astonishing, wise things; it was he who had grace and ease and self-assurance. Toward dawn he decided that he must not go to see her. In a month she would be gone, then he could go about his studying again, all traces of that other, remote world gone from him and his life. It might not be so pleasant, it might not be so exciting, but he must accept his life as it was. Somewhere, at some time, unconsciously, he felt that he must have made a choice. He must hold to it.

In the next week he felt more than ever removed from the people in Seymour. All about him were put to the test of her personality, and all proved clay and sand, without color or value of any kind. Van Doon! He felt as if some conspiracy had taken place in him against Van Doon. Yet he wanted to see Van Doon. It was curiosity. It seemed to him as if some extraordinary change had come over his friend; he wished to see him, to look into his

face for a long time, and read what this change had impressed there.

Van Doon's sleeping room and his laboratory were in a tower, a part of the annex connected with the chemical plant. Van Doon's tower had been Dana's refuge. Here were the things of the mind; here was the only place in Seymour, with the exception, perhaps, of the town jail, where there was not that suffocating air of rigorous home life.

Van Doon was in his blue work blouse. He had been working all night. There were tired lines in his face.

Because he had not wished to do so, Dana spoke her name at once.

"Miss Merik——"

Their eyes met. A silence came. Van Doon rose heavily, and went through the door into his sleeping room.

"Come in here. We can smoke."

He sat on his couch, his eyes squinting over his cigarette.

"I suppose you have seen her?" Dana asked, sitting.

"Yes. I went last week. She wasn't in. I met her on the road coming home. She wanted me to come back with her. We had tea. Several of the women came in—you know the crowd."

"Several of the women came in!" Dana could have laughed.

"Then they left."

"Then they left," repeated Dana.

"We talked then. Rather, *she* did. She likes it—and, of course, I don't."

"What did you do?"

Van Doon paused, looking at Dana's dark face with its large, deep eyes.

"I—I don't know," he said, lighting another cigarette. "I—I watched her."

"There long?"

"Oh, about an hour, I should say. Why?"

More significant than if it had been himself, more significant than anything could be, Dana saw their hour together. He saw the room with the large, open windows behind her back. He saw her

lying back on the couch, swinging the long, silver chain. He smelled the odor of the ancient embroideries. If he lived forever, if life poured out all her colors, if she led him into every city of the world and into every crooked, curious street, he would never equal that imagined hour shared by Van Doon and Miss Merik.

An unknown feeling found Dana with no defenses. It leaped out at him like an enemy from the dark. It sickened him. Van Doon saw trouble in his face. He was at a loss to account for it. They said an abrupt good-by like two men who have made an unsatisfactory business arrangement.

Dana went to see Anya the next day at tea time. At the gate he thought of the roses he had dropped there. He looked down behind the hedge. They were still there, withered and brown in their violet waxy paper. He resolved to tell her about the roses. He knew that it was the kind of thing she told. It was a part of her world to discuss these things which people did through sensitiveness.

He found her on the big couch at the window. There was the white hand. A bowl of white roses stood beside her. Van Doon! He knew it. How could he tell her now of the brown ones under the hedge? What stupidity!

"You have kept away so long——"

She knew, then! What a fool!

"I have been busy," he lied.

He saw, as he sat down, that there were lines under her eyes and little lines about her lips. Her lips sometimes trembled when she was silent. Could she, too, have uncertainties?

She was not really beautiful, he found. This light was too strong for her. Music had quivered little surfaces into being which took away the smoothness of youth. It was not her being beautiful, then. He did not know what it was. He did not know if it was. He had only his sense of distaste

and annoyance when he had reached home after seeing her, and his sense of competition with Van Doon. For it was competition.

As they talked, he knew that he did not want to touch her, that he did not want so much to know her thoughts, that he simply wanted it always to be tea time, with them sitting there like that, she on the couch among the embroideries and he on the stool near her, looking up at her when he talked.

As he was going, she gave him a copy of Shelley.

"Every one knows 'The Sensitive Plant,'" she said, "but not every one knows Shelley."

He took the book doubtfully.

"Read him and then come and tell me——"

It was like a schoolmistress, he thought, giving a lesson for home, or like a doctor giving a prescription. He felt annoyed.

At night, at home, lonely for something of her, he opened the little red book. He avoided reading "The Sensitive Plant." Every one had read that, she had said. He read "Adonais," "The Witch of Atlas," "Prometheus Unbound." Then he sat a long while thinking. These poems had given him the feeling of rocks. Steady, heavy-moving masses, containing all the force and heat of the ages. After all, this was the life he knew, explained to him. But it was not enough. He wanted the hot words of love, the personal, close words of human being to human being, something that would explain himself to himself. Then—"Epipsychidion."

Here!

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate,
Whose course has been so starless! Oh, too
late,
Belovéd! Oh, too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped
thine,
A divine spirit in a place divine.

Why are we not formed, as notes of music
are,

For one another, though dissimilar;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits
shake

As trembling leaves in a continuous air?

This poetry started sweet responses from him. His thoughts grouped themselves in words like these, direct and passionate. This poetry was a key that unlocked the dark in which he had been encased. Suddenly he saw everything clearly. Even Seymour. He saw at once into hearts that had been closed and colorless to him before. He saw the stripped motives of many gossiped lives, long forgotten by him, which before had not even interested him. And all of this fullness and light came from her, and went back to her again.

He went to see her every day at tea time, after she had done her practicing. They sat, she on the couch, he on the low stool, talking of music and of poetry. But, best of all, of people, *her* people! This was the most intoxicating wine of all. Outside of Seymour were people who did these unexpected things, people who lived their thoughts, people who led the emotions of the crowd by sharing with it the least of their own. Every anecdote, every adventure, seemed to flash back on her its own brilliance.

One day when Dana had stayed later than usual, he looked up to her face to see it turned, smiling, toward the door. He looked there. Van Doon!

"Am I too early?"

"No, of course not. Come in."

"I am too late."

Dana jumped to his feet and, without a word to his friend, left the room. He knew he was acting badly. She came, and thrust a book into his hands.

"A French poet. You will love him. It is beautifully translated."

"I have come every day for tea. Does Van Doon come every night to dinner?"

"It is the only time he can give," she said easily.

He saw how casual, how uninteresting the dinner hour was. Tea time! That was different. What a fool Van Doon was!

It had been enough, but one night, before her performance, she played. She had others there—Van Doon, of course; the schoolmistress who had written a blank-verse play in her youth, and had had it published in the university magazine; the church organist, and the minister, a silent man who had had dreams of becoming great. They were all dying people who came to art and to people like Anya Merik, as if for air. The church organist played the piano for her. She stood off in the alcove in a white, trailing dress, frowning over her violin.

Her music startled Dana like a sudden burst of rage. He felt that he could not sit in his chair. It was all that she had said to him, it was the odor of the Chinese embroideries, it was Shelley, and her smile, and the lost thing he had always been seeking in her. For the first time he could call the thing *love*. For the first time, he felt the actuality of that white, strong arm which held the violin. It was his own body she held and played upon. The torturing music held and relentlessly possessed him. It whirled him and drowned him, and yet demanded more than drowning, more than pain.

When she had finished, he laughed and stretched himself. He felt as if he had fallen and landed in an undignified position. He looked at Van Doon. He was bent over, his knee raised to support his arm, his hand holding his thick chin. It was his bulwark of himself against himself. He frowned, and his face was very red. As Anya Merik came toward them, Van Doon jumped to his feet and stood laughing and looking down like a shamefaced schoolboy.

The minister sat with his bitter mouth, loose from too much speech, twisted in a smile. It was *his* armor. His brown eyes were bright with things which had been driven away before the music had stopped. His hands were tightly together before him in an unconscious action of prayer.

The schoolmistress had frankly wept, because it had prevented her from being the prey to the emotions control would have allowed. She sat, red nosed and smiling, her hands stretched out toward Miss Merik. The organist followed Miss Merik with the sick admiration of the failure for the artist. In the next minute Dana saw the success flower in full bloom, saw its petals expand voluptuously to each ray of praise, saw its tendrils reach out for the furthest warmth of admiration, its perfume deepening in the sunshine of love and worship. She who seemed to be giving so much was taking, taking the small, stored force each had to give.

After a time, the pretty, wise-looking maid brought supper and served it in a graceful, accomplished way which, like everything else about her, seemed to reflect the light of Anya Merik. They drank toasts to her in her own champagne. During the supper, Dana, thrilling with the music and the champagne, went to her desk and wrote out the lines of Shelley's which he had memorized: "Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the——"

He slipped the paper into her hand as all were at the door ready to leave. He felt proud and happy. Now he had done something like the people of her world. Now she would know.

The volatile elements which had been poured into his being during the evening were too great for it. This desire, beginning in his imagination, now possessed his body the more powerfully. His room could not hold it.

He went out into his mother's gar-

den—a spring garden filled with lilacs, tulips, spirea, and sweet, flowering almond. He dug his hot hands into the grass and thought of Anya Merik's hair. He looked up at the stars, and thought of the poetry she had read to him, had had him read. He closed his eyes and smelled the night and felt her body about him, and each wave of air caressed him as if with her hands.

He tried to make his thought a being which would go to her. He tried to give it sight. He tried to give it touch. And again and again he sent it, and again and again it returned with something of her—but not enough. His mother's garden, like his room, could not hold his passion. Where could he go? There was only one place in the world—to her!

He walked up the road to her house, as one who obeys a superior's commands. He was on the path which led to her door. How long it seemed in the night! He was on her veranda. How large and forbidding it was in the dark! Her door opened. He was in her hall. How silent it was! He turned toward the living room where he had always gone. One low, forgotten light burned there in a corner. There was her couch where she sat at tea time, there was the vacant stool where he had sat every day, watching her face. But that in the center of the room—what was that? A large, dark, silent object! What was it doing there? From the shadows it took form, man's form. *Van Doon!*

Van Doon, standing as if in a storm, his legs braced, his head bent down. How long he stood, this statue of Van Doon! How immovable he was, and yet what space was he whirling through there in that storm!

And that! What was that which gleamed white against the dark of Van Doon? It was an arm, a strong, white arm, which moved slowly, ever circling closer, with a white, stretching hand

whose fingers clutched and relaxed like the claws of a cat!

From the dark of the hall Dana watched. He saw the furious storm sway the two until they could not stand. He saw it lift them and carry them, like helpless, trembling leaves, to the couch. He watched the fury of the tempest possess them until they were deaf to his voice and blind to his presence. He heard their cries and their sudden, wild laughter. Then—he ran away.

He stumbled down the road from her house like an old man who has been told that he is dying. His hands formed into fists. He beat himself.

Van Doon! Van Doon!

He thought of his great body, his little, green, brilliant eyes. Van Doon! Van Doon! He thought of the letter he had written to her. They had laughed at him together! The tears started out of his eyes. His lips trembled. He cried in his anger, making funny noises he had never made before. Van Doon! Van Doon!

The next day he felt that he must see Van Doon. He went to the laboratory. Van Doon was there in his blue work blouse, which was becoming to him because he felt at ease in it. It was absurd that Van Doon should be so glad to see him. Van Doon did not know, had not even guessed. What a fool he was! What a great, healthy fool! Women liked fools, he thought. It made them feel kind. Van Doon talked to-day, which was unusual for him. He talked of things he had never spoken of before, of music and of literature, and he spoke of Shelley. It was really amusing, Dana thought.

But there was something new about him, Dana saw. He had a confident clearness of look which he had never had before. He was now like a man who had commanded a victorious army.

That afternoon Dana went, as usual,

to have tea with her. In this way the weeks passed. He possessed their days. Their nights were lost to him. It seemed to him that at night he walked in a dark wood, one end of which was burning. The fire came nearer and nearer to him, but, although he could feel its heat, it did not touch him.

One night his thoughts became unbearable. *Van Doon!* He ran out of his mother's house without a hat. He went to the annex and let himself in, as Van Doon had showed him how to do. A small light burned in the laboratory. Van Doon's worktable was as neat and as immaculate as ever, each instrument and vial in place.

He had been thinking of it all night. It was such a simple matter. He knew Van Doon's secrets. This vial contained a liquid which was a slave in the right quantity and the right place, but which was a terrible agent of destruction in the wrong quantity or the wrong place. He had only to transfer it into the vial labeled with the name of a harmless coefficient, and Van Doon's hands, reaching confidently in the accustomed place for the trusted servant, would unknowingly grasp the fiend.

As he finished his work, he heard a step on the stairs below. Van Doon! It was almost morning. He should have thought! He had a first impulse to hide. Following closely came the desire to fight. Let them touch, muscle to muscle. It was better so. Suddenly, as he crouched, waiting, Van Doon opened the door, blinking in the light.

"What— Oh, you, Dana? You startled me."

Van Doon looked into Dana's dark face and read his history of the past month. Without a word, he slipped out of his coat and pulled down his blue blouse over his head.

"You're late," Dana said huskily.

"Yes—walking."

Van Doon's anxious look of friendship made everything impossible.

Dana moved toward him, opening his arms in a kind of desperate embrace. Then he saw that Van Doon had suddenly forgotten him. He sat at his worktable, his hands near the glass retorts, looking out over the hills at the dawn, as if he were watching his first daybreak.

Lost in his memories, he did not hear Dana go.

"His dreams! Oh, to kill his dreams!"

Before the sun had risen, the first explosion was heard. Several workmen getting ready to come to the factory for the day heard the report and rushed, half dressed, to the plant. When they reached it, the flames had already begun. Dana ran with the men. For an instant the wind lifted the flames from the building and he saw Van Doon's tower stand clear and half untouched against the sky. In the window he thought he saw a big form in blue. He dared not look. The men had placed a ladder for rescue. He heard a shout. Dana dared not think whose.

Then there came a succession of explosions, like cannon shots, and the black and deep red shot up in the air, surrounding the annex like a sinister flower, in which no living thing could breathe.

As he ran nearer, Dana thought:

"He has gone! She will forget! Now I—I—— It should have been I. He was clever. He was wise. He knew how—— But now—I will follow her—everywhere! Sooner or later—— It *must* be! Oh, how glad I am! He has had his dream; now let me have mine! Now it is my turn! Now everything is beginning for me."

The flames were reaching for the main building. They touched it, creeping unseen, screened by curtains of black smoke. Suddenly there was a red, winking glare. Twice it came. The men shouted and moved away in confusion. Then a fierce explosion; and with a shrieking and tearing, the factory roof shot off, sending the copper factory whistle, a glittering, whirling projectile, with terrific speed through the air.

It found a target. In an instant, all the eagerness for life, all the passion and longing, all the hatred and jealousy which had been Dana Taylor was no more. He lay dead on the grass in the clear, fresh light of the rising sun.

The next night Anya Merik gave her first concert in Seymour. She had never played so well. She stood before Seymour in a trailing white dress, frowning over her violin, swaying as if in a storm.

Seymour feared art. It seemed to have many victims, and these were not always artists.

APOCALYPSE

PRISON! There is a challenge,
A bugle, a gun in the word.
Caged! Oh, what hells of fury
Stifle a bird!

Escape! At a signal the senses
Stir and start to explore.
Free! Oh, what heavens of wonder,
Shore beyond shore!

WILLIAM GRIFFITH.



Soul and Onion Soup

By Lawrence Vail

MRS. VAN CUYP'S smile was a miracle of execution; it afforded the maximum of cordiality with the minimum of peril to the masseur's triumph over time on the battlefield of her complexion. For the fraction of a minute she allowed a finger of bone and wrinkled skin to rest on Conrad's hand; then, as her smile receded—the corners of her mouth released, as it were, by some secret spring—he felt her finger urging him, thrusting him into the room adjoining.

The masculine bric-a-brac of Eastern Europe and South America seemed to have given rendezvous in Mrs. van Cuyp's winter garden to that species of womankind whom only a scarcity of worldly charm and superabundance of worldly goods have prevented enlisting in the more choice cohorts of the demimonde. Emigrants from doubtful regions, pursuants of strange and not-too-honest traffics, they stood, these tall and tawny men, planted in their pointed shoes, conscious of their studs, perfumes, masculinity, allowing themselves to be admired without protest, after the fashion of their sex.

They seldom talked; now a smile, sinister and condescending, would part their humid lips; their dark, beady eyes never ceased to roll. They seemed to regard these groups of tittering women as a feast spread for their enjoyment. And the more insistent, provocative waxed their stare, the more fondly, voraciously did their votaries respond by smirk and titter, as if they were persuaded that their sole function upon earth was to stir and flatter the appetites of those so kind to look upon them.

Tempering muscle with apologies,

Conrad sought to carve himself an alley through the throng. A sallow, black-mustached pelican of a man regarded him through his monocle with impudent nonchalance. Conrad thought to hear himself condemned in sneering tones. "What insolence for you, a man with health, hearth, convictions, to intrude upon us, the smooth and roving parasites! I should not be surprised to learn that you were of the stolid, plodding kind, the kind that stoops to work for bread and roof and beer. Doubtless your papers are in order, you sleep at nights, eat at regular hours, support yourself, some woman, too, by vulgar expenditure of honest sweat."

What astonished Conrad most, however, was the attitude of a heavy blonde, sparsely wrapped in some loose folds of flimsy pink. He felt her recoil from him as the pressure of the mob caused him to sway against her. Her small eyes blazed. "Odd!" mused Conrad. "I thought her a beast in muslin, proud of the muslin, still prouder of the beast. She acts as if I were caked in mud and was too odorous of man."

Against the buffet a diminutive man in tweeds was busily drinking punch. Clean-shaven, dapper, of practical everyday appearance, he seemed so out of harmony with his surroundings that Conrad was led to talk to him.

"I wonder," Conrad inquired, "if you would mind telling me where I am?"

The little man observed Conrad keenly. Suddenly his eyes lit up.

"A barbarian!" he exclaimed. "How did you get here?"

"It is evident," said Conrad, "that I have made an error. It was my intention to call on Mrs. Philip Swain."

"She lives next door. Still, you might have fallen worse. There is plenty here to eat and drink and see and smell."

"Who is she, then—the lady with the frozen finger?"

"You mean our hostess? Mrs. van Cuyp."

"A Dutchwoman?"

"No—Bostonian. She was Dutch once, when she was married and unsophisticated. Her husband, Van Cuyp, a Java tea planter, was found—how shall I put it?—lacking. He got off scot-free, only left his pocketbook behind him. I hear he's back in Java now, starting business again, from the bottom. Ah, lucky, lucky man!"

There lay such a depth of pathos in these words that Conrad feared that any comment must fall flat.

"This is the only house in Paris," remarked the little man, "where you are sure to meet no French and no Americans."

"Surely you are not European?"

"Once, long ago, I was an American. Overton is my name. From Elizabeth, New Jersey. Mrs. van Cuyp has decided, however, that I am cosmopolitan." He lowered his voice. "You see, she discovered something in me."

"Would it be indiscreet—"

"Certainly not. Every one knows it, except myself, perhaps. I am reputed to have a soul."

"A soul!"

Mr. Overton emitted a heavy sigh.

"All of us," he said with an aggressive movement of his chin toward the crowd, "are considered to have souls. Very special souls, too, ever so delicate and sensitive, which distinguish us from the common run of men. That's why, you see, we are always misunderstood. That's why we have to keep together. Yes, you have fallen, my dear sir, on the most eclectic group of mystics in western Europe."

"Mystics!" Conrad exclaimed. "I al-

ways imagined them long and thin and poorly clad, pointed of knee and chin, with transparent cheeks and raving eyes. Your friends, if you will pardon me, do not appear to deny themselves material satisfactions. I see eyes rolling at heaving bosoms, bosoms heaving at the call of rolling eyes. The erotic exotics, I should call them."

"That shows," returned Mr. Overton, "how appearances can be deceiving. I grant that these ladies may have possessed at some earlier date in their career appetites proportioned to their figures. Nature, however, did not favor them with superficial beauty and piquancy of manner. It may be that they experienced difficulty in obtaining husbands, lovers, admirers. The fault, they decided, did not rest with them; they were reserved for higher, better things. This led them to renounce the flesh for the spirit. They did not choose the coward's course, retire to convent and meditation, but preferred to battle for their ideals in the world. The bosom heaving that you mention is merely a survival of the past. The flesh may err, may heave, react to the memory of habit, early environment, heredity; this does not prevent the spirit from soaring and picking daisies in the Elysian fields."

"And these exotic gentlemen—they of the bilious flesh and rolling eyes—do their spirits also soar?"

"Ah, they are different. They are hungry—hungry for bread and cheese and meat. They have a prejudice against working for their living. They are fed while they aspire and absorb."

"Mr. Overton," said Conrad, "it always pleases me to meet an ironist."

"If you do not believe me," said the little man, "you have but to listen to them."

Conrad made a brave effort to draw some sense and logic from the medley of rolling sounds around him. Then, little by little, snatches and limbs of

phrases stood forth in vague relief against the general hubbub:

"The will, my dear, behind the curtain."

"Ah, yes, to struggle for the realization of the will."

"Then, only then, shall it be given to hearken to the flapping of the wings."

"The white wings flapping in white ether."

"But we are ether."

"Yes, Hester, clotted ether."

"A fine animal!" spoke a thin, pointed voice. "That's all you can say about him."

"I know a girl," said Conrad to Overton, "with large, red arms and swollen feet, who wears the bravest smile in Paris. Every morning she gets up at three o'clock to buy flowers in the Halles. All day long she rolls her heavy cart through the dusty Paris streets, and I have a great fondness for her, though she may never soar to behold the lining of the cloud. I know where I can find her at this hour, pale, thirsty, very tired. Will you not join us in an onion soup, a chateaubriand, and a bottle of Anjou wine?"

A light of desire, envy, flickered for an instant in the little man's blue eyes. Very dismally he shook his head.

"Impossible," he moaned. "I must stay here, bide my time, on the Threshold of the Mystic Chamber."

"The threshold of Bedlam?" muttered Conrad.

"It's too late to escape. You see—I'm drugged."

"Drugged!"

"Yes—soul drugged."

"I can only offer you," spoke Conrad, making an effort to adopt the mystic intonation, "the advice of a barbarian. I should suggest that you remain in this hour of tribulation within convenient reach of the consoling punch bowl."

Mr. Overton turned to fill his glass.

Suddenly a little wail broke from him. The bowl was empty.

A sense of sick physical weakness swayed through Conrad. He felt his muscles yielding, his head spun. A panic seized him. He wondered if he, too, were being soul drugged. Abandoning Mr. Overton, he made for the door.

He was arrested by a finger on his arm. A lean, famished figure of a woman closely draped from toes to neck in slovenly black crape was gazing at him rapturously with humid eyes.

"Master," she moaned. "Oh, master!"

Conrad removed the retaining finger from his sleeve. This, at last, was a creature he could place. No disappointed votary of Venus versed in the spirit speech! She had the transcendent transparency of skin, the mystic bones.

"To think," she uttered, "that I should find you here!"

Conrad shrugged his shoulders.

"The drift of cosmos."

She gazed at him imploringly; her nostrils quivered.

"Ah, do not jest! You mean the infinite symmetry of spirit? The inevitable fulfillment of the plan?"

"It is not permitted," said Conrad severely, "to inquire into the purpose at this hour."

A sigh shook her. Conrad thought to hear the rattle of her bones.

"The same answer! Always the same answer! But I have evolved, master, since that tragic night in Egypt."

"Evolved, perhaps, but you are far from being spiritually renewed. The ancient taint will cling. Do not, however, be disheartened. No more could be accomplished in so short a space of time."

"Too little time—you say? Forty centuries have come and gone."

"Forty centuries! A drop of water, a grain of sand, in the infinite."

Again she laid her fingers on his sleeve, her fingers fumbled eagerly for his hand. An invitation, utterly devoid of mystic innocence, played grotesquely on her thin, dry lips.

"Is not your servant worthy of you yet?"

Conrad bestowed a smile upon her of infinite compassion and benevolence.

"Work. Struggle. Purify yourself. In every incarnation mortify the flesh. Perhaps—in sixty—eighty centuries—you will find a pillow in the house of Abraham, a resting place in the orchard where Orpheus plays the lute."

Whereupon Conrad shook her and the dust of the house of mystics from his person.

How sweet and valiant the vulgar air of street and city! Good, too, rejuvenating, the raw din of the busy world! He laughed at the rumble of a tram. He passed a grocer's store and filled his nostrils with the crude scent of cheese and pickles. How splendid to have a body, to be strong and gay and curious, to live freely, wildly, with limbs and blood unhampered by a soul.

Across the street a woman was walking to and fro. How vivid and alive she seemed, bruising the pavement with

her tiny heels! She tilted now and again a nervous, expectant chin toward the lighted windows behind which the mystics were communing.

In an instant Conrad was beside her. Forgotten immediately was she of the swollen feet and bravest smile, who pushed a cart of flowers through the dusty streets of Paris.

"Come!" he cried, lyrically impatient of wary preliminaries. "I shall give you an onion soup, a chateaubriand, and a bottle of Anjou wine."

Her lips hardened, her cold, black eyes pierced through him like little blades. And then she broke into thin, disdainful laughter.

"What have you done in there," she said, "to come out with an empty purse? I am accustomed to different offers from the habitués."

And as Conrad, confused, crestfallen, forbore to press his invitation, he felt a lean, arresting finger on his sleeve. He shook helplessly with rage and horror. She of the shabby crape and mystic bones was fawning on him.

"Master," she spoke, "why do you disdain your servant? Will you not give her an onion soup, a chateaubriand, and a bottle of Anjou wine?"



REALIZATION

I OFTEN wondered whether you would come,
And what my quickening heart would have to say;
I'd dream a while, then tremble; then I'd pray,
And all the world would grow most strangely dumb.
I'd laugh a little, hear some music, then
Ponder what mission had been planned for me,
That I should be thus crowned—when, suddenly,
I'd reel back, broken, into a world of men.

And now—you're here and I can touch your hand,
And hear your voice, and look into your eyes;
And, dear, the birds still sing, the roses glow,
Winds play, flowers dream, old yearnings come and go,
Life, death, youth, age, obey the old command,
And all our earlier laughter fills the skies!

JOHN BLACK.



Philanderer's Progress

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "The Stone Serpent," etc.

IV.—Helen

PHILOSOPHERS have paid for their reckonings with death, and many a poet has lost the world for a lovely face. Steven Trayle merely broke his leg. However, the face did not appear to him as lovely, and his philosophical reflections were extremely simple. No doubt the punishment was quite in proportion.

Where the Madison Avenue cars swing flat, unwieldy bodies around the curve of Forty-second Street, as if to sweep aside the subway entrance on the corner with a blow, pedestrians and the motor traffic mingle in a glitter of confusion. A senseless activity as of an ant hill fills the scene; men seem, indeed, dwarfed, diminutive; and the number of passers-by who have murmured: "What a wonder it is that more people aren't injured!" would, laid end to end, reach from here to—any planet you please. Once upon a time some one really was injured, and his name was Steven Trayle.

A woman, hurrying past in the surging crowd, had caught his leisurely attention. It might have been her haste that drew his eyes; he gathered only a swift, vague impression, and she was gone. The face, he thought, had good features and pleasant contours. She wore a flaunting hat, cerise in color, and Steven had a visual memory of a cheaply smart sport suit. Born to happier circumstances, to a superior taste, she might have passed for a very allur-

ing woman. Life—life was a matter of environment. Life was abominably cruel! Life—

The middle of a clangorous street is scarcely designed as a seminar for innocent philosophers. "All of us are in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars," said Wilde in a frequently quoted line. Steven discovered himself literally in the gutter where a touring car had pushed him, after rolling nonchalantly over his legs. One of them had been wrenched damnably; shafts of pain traveled rhythmically up and down it like the piston of an engine. He was aware of many tongues, blending like the sea into a single voice; frightened faces, faces drinking in his misery with a lustful, animal expression, the faces of a chauffeur, of a policeman.

"This—this is ridiculous!" said Steven reproachfully to the policeman. He had an insane desire to laugh. Getting hurt was like getting drunk; it took one's mind off oneself. And all at once he had a sense of profound humility. "Quite my fault. You see, I—here, I'll get up!"

But he couldn't get up, and it seemed to him that the very next instant he was bouncing merrily along in a taxicab with an alarm clock in it that wouldn't let a fellow sleep. It occurred to him then that he was in an ambulance that breathed upon the crowded streets it threaded an evanescent emotion. His

head grew clearer. A vast sympathy for humanity enveloped him; he loved them all, the poor, the sick, the weary; he understood them all; he was their brother. He longed to cry out to them that he understood! But he relinquished the idea with sadness as impracticable, and presently, without any apparent interval, his eyes met the eyes of a scrubbily bearded man bending over him on an operating table.

"Doctor," said Steven solemnly, "the question as to whether physical pain or mental pain is worse has been much debated. For my part——"

"Breathe deep, Mr. Trayle."

Steven sulkily postponed certain brilliant observations that had occurred to him, and found the world slipping away. A terror, an agony of terror, that his mind would remain conscious, while his body lay strapped and impotent, shook him; he cried out in protest, and magically the operating table became a bed, and Steven was conscious again of the inquiring gaze of the scrubbily bearded man. His head sang; a loathly nausea swam in his blood.

"Doctor, what's happened? Where am I? Was it an amputation?"

The surgeon smiled.

"You will probably never play hopscotch again. Otherwise, in a week or two you'll be as sound as ever. You had a bad fracture and there was some bonesetting to do that made an anesthetic necessary."

He looked at his watch, nodded, and moved off.

After an interlude, Steven opened his eyes again, and they fell upon a woman, grave and gentle, wearing the trim, starched uniform of a nurse. For an instant Steven Trayle forgot his wretchedness. His idiotic reflections upon a plain woman had rushed him forthright into the presence of a lovely one. He marveled that the instinct of attraction should dominate even the actualities of pain. His pondering stare drank in the

details of the liquid-brown eyes, the smoothly arranged, dark hair, the smoldering pathos in the face. She was not pretty, not comely, in the familiar sense, but she had the formal beauty of some sad madonna.

"It was worth it," said Steven weakly, "worth going through this just to meet you."

She threw back her head and laughed. It was a light, good-humored laugh which did not match her face, and yet the surprise of it was queerly attractive.

That laugh, that light manner, in conjunction with Helen Rogers' sad eyes and brooding air, remained for Steven a charming mystery. He loved the wistfulness of her face, but he delighted more in provoking the gayety that shattered it. He was outrageously flippant; he stepped outside his personality to crack a silly joke.

"Well!" he exclaimed, as she came in one morning with breakfast, paper, the mail, "What bloodcurdling news have you to offer? How's the old man in seventy-eight? Does he still swear fluently? And that poor devil of an Italian who thinks himself the victim of a conspiracy to murder him? Has he tried to bribe you again?"

She showed him amused eyes.

"None of them is as funny as you."

"Funny? What a word! I always wondered why a professional nurse was so much better than an amateur. I suppose it's because in the former case the sympathy is merely pretended. Proving—— What does it prove? Oh, that artifice is superior to honesty, or something."

Her face had resumed its habitual somberness, and Steven surveyed her keenly.

"Do you know," he observed, "you're strikingly good-looking? Of course you do! The question was purely rhetorical. A more intelligent question is: How many patients have fallen in love

with you? Do you notch them off on a stick?"

She said in a quick, cool voice:

"One did; and I married him."

"You're married? I hadn't the slightest idea——"

"I *was* married," she murmured, and her eyes fell. "I—I left him, and later he died."

Steven tried to summon some phrase of tact to his lips, but, in spite of his desire, he could not manage it. His bantering, superficial manner persisted. With mock solemnity he asked:

"Helen, my dear, is there still a chance for me?"

She laughed that brisk, gay laugh which seemed so incongruous and so delightful.

"Aren't you ever serious?"

"Whenever I am, I'm flippant. When I'm apparently serious, I'm only laughing up my sleeve. Better change the subject before I give you six volumes of introspection, mostly lies. I prefer to talk of you! Tell me. Do you enjoy nursing?"

"I love it. That is, some of it. I don't like the routine here, you see. It's not easy work."

Later in the morning Steven's brother dropped in to speak with him. He wore a clouded brow.

"You're not the only invalid, Steve," he announced. "Have you heard about uncle Jack? He's going into one of his periodic 'illnesses,' and he's sending out the usual hints to the family."

Steven grinned. "It's almost lucky that I'm disabled. Still, as I put up with him on the last occasion, it's some one else's turn now."

Robert Trayle gave a cough of embarrassment.

"The fact is—the fact is that none of us can get away or spare the time at present, and as you'll soon be up and about, we thought—we thought——"

Steven frowned. Uncle Jack, the family hypochondriac, had amassed a

fortune that would some day be divided among his nephews and nieces. A prim, kittenish old bachelor, with a few thin hairs plastered over a bald head, and a petulant manner, he lived alone in Johnstown, devoting himself to a local church. Vaguely, Steven recalled that he was a deacon or an elder or a lay reader or some such oddity.

Every two or three years it pleased uncle Jack to decide that his time had come, and to take to his bed with no defined ailment. On such occasions he notified the family and expressed a wish that some one of his own blood be near him in his last hours. After uncle Jack had bullied the family representative to his heart's content, and grown thoroughly bored with his own martyrdom, he would achieve a miraculous recovery—due to prayer—and send up a whine of thanks to God.

Twice Steven had been elected to the post; and uncle Jack's personality was peculiarly distasteful to him. On his last visit to the weather-beaten old house in the foothills of the Adirondacks, he remembered one circumstance that had infuriated him. Uncle Jack read the one metropolitan newspaper every morning, and when he had finished it, he placed it carefully over his face and went amiably to sleep. In town, a cursory glance at the headlines satisfied Steven; miles away, in the heart of a lonely countryside, he hungered for news like a castaway on an island. And he had to wait until the paper was a day old, because uncle Jack refused to take his nap under any other than a fresh newspaper!

That incident stepped into Steven's mind as characteristic, and informed his tones with determination.

"I'll be hanged if I'll go! Why don't you go yourself? I've done my share."

"But see here, Steven," his brother pleaded, "it's different in your case. You've retired, and you don't seem anxious to do anything. I can't spare

the time. Neither can Julian; and you know what young Newell Williams is! He'd make a mess of the thing, and all that money would go to some shabby little backwoods church."

"Well, it's not my affair," Steven repeated doggedly. "I'll be hanged if I'll ever go there again, even if every penny came to me!"

Robert left him somewhat sourly, but Steven realized that his decision had not been regarded as final, and looked forward dismally to other influences, other pressures.

Indeed, it was the very next day that Robert's wife called and tried dexterously to lead to the subject by delicate methods. Steven, polite and equable, baffled her, waved aside her openings, and turned the topic a dozen times. His sister-in-law left in a flurry of badly hidden anger.

But when, on the following afternoon, Steven learned from Helen Rogers that cousin Josephine was outside, he trembled. Cousin Josephine did not fence. Her upright and indomitable spirit would batter him in the end into a fatigued acceptance.

"Tell her I'm not in!" he wailed to Helen Rogers. "Say I've gone out for a stroll! Tell her I'm dead!"

"Shall I say you're too ill to see any one to-day?"

"Try anything. Only don't let her browbeat you. My cousin Josephine is a terrible woman. She's afraid of nothing. She's not even afraid of me."

He was almost incredulous when Helen returned to assure him that his cousin had gone quietly away. He surveyed her with admiration.

"How the deuce do you do it? Weren't you expecting her to brush past you and push the door open? Surely she wasn't meek! I've a suspicion that she'll be back within an hour with a warrant or a habeas corpus. My cousin Josephine will probably be our next president!"

"Would you like to read now for a time?"

"I'd much prefer to talk to you. I'm a very sick man. It's doubtful if I pull through the night. Sit down, won't you, just a little while?"

"But I've got to go very soon."

"Do you want me to have a real relapse?"

She laughed.

"I wish you wouldn't say things like that. I wish you'd be serious really."

"Suppose I were? Suppose—suppose I am?"

Her eyes met his, wavered, and flashed away. He put out his hand, caught hers, and drew her down to the bed. For a moment she hovered over him, and her lips touched his. He had a flying impression of a dim fragrance, of a soft skin, of shut eyes, and, deep in the silence, the thumping of his own heart. Then she was gone, she had vanished, and he was alone in the white, drug-scented room.

Not a word spoken, not a gesture made, to mar the perfection of an instant which opened before him a vista of colored days! Steven Trayle felt absurdly stimulated, absurdly happy. He knew now, for a surety, that his world was made for lovers.

On the pavement in front of Vautrin's, Steven waited for her with a nervous impatience. He had left the hospital only yesterday, and to-day, this evening, he had arranged to meet her and take her to dinner.

He hadn't conventionally fallen in love with his nurse through illness and propinquity. In one sense he hadn't even been ill; and after a few days in a wheel chair in the sun parlor, he was able to make his way about gingerly for short distances. He had lingered on for an extra twenty-four hours, feigning inability. He had been afraid to lose her, reluctant to surrender that

constant, dear association for the few hours he might snatch from her unoccupied time afterward. Was there ever a woman as charming, as delicious?

And he had won her, he knew that. She admitted as much with a glance. She loved him. He was frankly the lover. There was no question of marriage between them. He had a suspicion that she would have flouted it even if he had suggested it.

Meanwhile, he waited before the door of Vautrin's, and his mind was occupied with many possibilities. He must persuade her to go away somewhere, to quit for a space the work she loved. But perhaps here in New York he might find, after all, a background as alluring as anywhere. He did not know; that would solve itself.

Thinking of her, he felt the blood pound through him, as in memory his senses responded again to her appeal. The moments he had held her in his arms! The evening by the window as twilight came down, sitting there in stillness, in so perfect comprehension! And she had made him no speeches, no vows. Faltering breaths of endearment, sighs that had held all life in them, an essential mystery unblurred by futile attempts to render it articulate—he had these things locked like treasures in his heart. The grave, calm face with its sudden flash of healthy laughter filled his vision. It was as if only the lighter part of her owned an expression; too deep for speech lay her soul.

And, in the absorbing interest of his love affair, he had defied his relatives and refused to play the buffer for uncle Jack, who had already begun to hint at a general disinheritor for this ingratitude. Steven ran away from them all; he cared nor jot nor tittle; love sang in the air, in his spirit, and material disturbances mattered not at all.

He was recalled sharply from his fancies at the sight of a woman, a

woman in a flaunting cerise hat and a cheaply smart sport suit. Where had he seen her before? With what did he associate her? Ah! he remembered. She was the woman upon whom he had meditated pompously in the middle of a crowded crossing; and for those dim abstractions he had been knocked down and run over. What a coincidence! It was she who, in a sense, had brought him and Helen together.

He altered his position as she advanced in order that he might satisfy his curiosity with a good look at her. She came nearer. Good heavens! It was Helen herself!

He had a giddy moment of terror. He wanted to run. And all at once he found himself greeting her in a voice that stammered.

It seemed to Steven Trayle that even-
ing that he had never had a worse dinner. Vautrin's, an obscure French restaurant, with the airs of a *pension*, served a simple, plentiful meal which, in other days, had been rendered more than passable by the addition of a bottle of thin, red wine. Was it the lack of the latter that made the food seem now so very inferior? He wondered.

With startled eyes he examined the woman with whom he was—with whom he had been—so earnestly in love. Her air of faint sadness, her wistful, perfect features, seemed engulfed, seemed drowned in gaudy, inappropriate clothing. In the austere simplicity of her uniform she had been almost beautiful, and now she seemed unutterably ordinary. Strange, what a difference clothes made! That too vivid hat struck a note as surprising as her laughter, but, unlike her laughter, it destroyed the pure, grave tone of her features. Her humor was, after all, an accentuation of her unique personality, but her grooming was—oh, it was abominable! She seemed silly, a little cheap. Escape lurked in Steven's eyes as in the eyes of a wild animal, and,

fearing that she might discover it, he forced himself into a desperate gayety.

He had no very clear thoughts about the matter. Instinct urged him to run. He had desired her, built illusions about her, and he could still close his eyes and perceive her in her former self as a picture of sensuous charm. Though the same woman now sat before him, illusion was gone and desire dead. He couldn't continue an affair in the face of these circumstances. Ways and means of retreat filled his consideration. A cynic's epigram occurred to him. "An amateur can begin a love affair, but it takes a connoisseur to break one off!" He heard her voice in a subdued key:

"Steven, do you really—I mean, you do——" She ceased abruptly, and her eyes concluded the sentence.

"Do I adore you?" Steven whispered across the table. "Oh, my darling, I can't live without you! I can't wait!" He felt pale and sick. Good God! He was getting in deeper and deeper.

"I was afraid," she faltered. "You see, I—well, I'll tell you. I was going to leave the hospital—and leave New York. But I sha'n't now. I'll stay on because of you."

Steven wet his lips with his tongue. Where had her attractiveness vanished? How could she appear so colorless? It was as if a magician had touched her with his wand and transformed her, body and mind. Hopefully he wondered if he couldn't change, gradually, but definitely, her whole manner of dress, her destructive get-up. But the memory of his struggle to refine the soul of a gay little wanton recurred to him. He might attempt to remodel a soul, but dare he attempt to alter a less disputable possession of women—a style?

Ironically it came to him that here, with a clear field before him, with a woman who was, or fancied herself, in love with him, he no longer cared to

pursue. Romancing should be pitched in a key of farce. It wore no nobler character.

The last expedient stepped into his mind. If he could get her back into her uniform again, he could forget this present picture and admit her spell once more. He had a fantastic notion of conducting this affair where it had first begun. He saw himself stepping in the path of a taxi, stipulating for the same hospital, the same doctor, the same nurse. It was too preposterous! He dragged his thoughts back to normality like a man escaping from madness. To break the desperate silence he remarked slowly:

"You were going to leave the hospital, you say? How do you mean? What were you going to do?"

"It was my first chance at an outside appointment. Doctor Thorpe put it in my way. And from there I might have gone into private work in people's homes."

He looked at her grimly. He would have to kiss her when they parted. He would have to make an assignation, probably for the following day. He saw no delight in the prospect, and he cursed himself for his sentimental weakness. If he could only win back his sense of attraction by some shift! If he could but get her, even for a few moments, in her severe white uniform which played up so magnificently to her individuality. And then he heard her say:

"I'm glad. I'm glad of what I did. I'd do it over again. Though Doctor Thorpe said I was a fool. He told me Mr. Savile is a very wealthy old man, and it was an unusual opportunity for any one to start with."

"What name? Who?" Steven gasped.

"Mr. Savile, Mr. John Savile." He lives in Johnstown. Do you know him?"

"Do I know him!" Steven cried.

"Dear—dear Helen, you'd better take the appointment, after all. 'I'll—I'll be there, too. You see, Mr. Savile is my uncle Jack!'"

Almost a week later, at an hour which was not conventional, the bell rang violently in Steven Trayle's old brown house on Madison Avenue. Mrs. Gunn, his crotchety housekeeper, was dispatched to admit the visitor, who proved to be Robert Trayle.

He found Steven in the midst of leisurely packing. Steven was leaving on an early morning train for Johnstown, and he was humming cheerfully

as he worked. But one glance at Robert's excited eyes and anxious manner caused him to put down the shoe-trees in his hand.

"What's happened?"

"Uncle Jack—uncle Jack——" Robert began chokingly.

"He's not dead?"

"Dead? He's worse! He's married that confounded nurse he had sent up there. Stupid old fool! At his age!"

Steven's sympathy in the crisis was really all that Robert could have asked. In fact, Robert afterward mentioned to his wife that Steven had really a sane respect for money.



TO THE NIGHT

NOW fill the golden goblet of the day
With purple twilight, level to the brim
The bright wine flames. The changing colors play
Like liquid rainbows at the goblet's rim.

Fill all the world! Let beauty overflow
The earth's edge, where the swift lights glance and run.
Then drop within the rippled afterglow
The warm, rich ruby of the setting sun.

Oh, Pagan Night, like Cleopatra drest
In royal robes, the jeweled vintage gleams.
Set silent lips against the yellow west
And drink the sweet infinitude of dreams.

Quaff! Quaff the wonder from the fading sky!
Drink to the dream of still eternities.
Mad with the urge of beauty, drink and die,
Draining the goblet to the starry lees!

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



Hearts on Trial

By C. B. Millary

Author of "The Baseball Patient in B," etc.

MONTRESSOR GARLAND and Louise Davenant sat in the twilight by the fire, which deepened and glowed in the gathering dusk; the only sound, made now and then, by a falling coal that snapped and sparkled its life out. He broke the silence.

"I have decided to marry."

Still intent on the fire, she raised her brows in lazy interest.

"You should have done that long ago," she drawled.

He spoke further:

"I have decided to marry you."

Her interest deepening, she looked up.

"You should have done *that* long ago. You are sure I would do as well as another?"

"Better, I think. In no particular way, perhaps, but as a whole. I am used to your ways, some of which rest and even please me; some of which weary and annoy me."

"How interesting! I feared that at best I could but bore you."

"Not yet; that will come later, doubtless."

"There are still diversions. Barring wine, there are woman and song—but you do not care for music." She held her hands out to the fire and looked at the light through her slim fingers. "But we digress. Might you not find some one who would more often please and rest you, and less often weary and annoy?"

"I am, I think, reasonably sure of

my grounds. One woman has one way I like; another, another. But, as I shall marry but one at a time, you seem to come the nearest to what I want or to what I think I want—the same thing."

For a while the fire seemed to be of absorbing interest to them both. She listened for him to speak till she thought she should scream, and, after a preliminary kicking of a coal back from the fire with the toe of her ultrasmart shoe, she turned a smiling face to him.

"When is the—er—affair to come off?"

"Could you see to that, you know? It's so deadly tiresome, I think."

"There we fully agree, which makes a good start. Now, why can't we take each other by the hand and say 'Come, Louise. Come, Monty. We'll try it? I will promise to be true to you till I see some one I prefer, or till you are——'"

"There's an idea. What would one do in that case?"

"Have an affair, doubtless, more or less hidden—they usually think they hide it—then exposure! We'll make no such mistake. When we find we can no longer endure each other in decency——"

"Oh, I say! Couldn't you make it 'if' instead of 'when?'"

"A truce to your finer sensibilities! If we find we can no longer endure each other, or, if you find you——"

"Speak for yourself!"

"There is always release of a kind—all roads lead to Reno."

He was silent. She continued:

"Father and mother will be glad of our decision. I am twenty-five and have been out for endless ages; people are bored stiff by seeing me pose as a bud. Beryl must come out. For years she has looked like a crane in short skirts. Our wedding will give her a golden opportunity, and, at the same time, dispose of me gracefully."

"The wedding! I suppose there must be one of some kind?"

"I wish to Heaven there need not be! A vulgar parade over a delicate transaction! But, it makes rich copy to hark back to when things go wrong."

"Couldn't one cut the parade? I could be called suddenly to South America. How soon could you be ready?"

"As soon as your plans could be made. Isn't a license considered necessary to legitimize a trial in double harness?"

"It sounds naked—er—bald."

"It is both. Truth is nothing but a skeleton; we pad her, paint her, stick on patches, but even then there are some who can hear her dry bones rattle."

"Louise! It is positively ghastly, the idea."

"I know. Isn't it?" A log broke and fell, doubling comically, crooked black legs thrust helplessly into the air. They stooped to replenish the fire. They were very near each other, but had no more idea of touching each other than if they had been in different worlds. They rose suddenly, in some confusion, realizing something queer in the situation. He mumbled some commonplace and stooped, raked the coals into a heap, and carefully placed fresh fuel. Though he felt keenly the scrutiny he was under, he did not hurry. He sat back wearily; he spoke as if anxious to have something over.

"Would you be content with a legal marriage alone?"

"Why not? Is it not the only real one? If an agent of the law can untie the knot, why can he not tie it? The divorce courts now make it such a farce.

If God joined two people together, how could it be in human power to put them apart?"

"As you put it, it would seem that it couldn't be done. Then there is the license, the registrar, the passage, anywhere out of the beaten track."

"Don't enthuse—it's too fatiguing."

The light died out of his face; he sat silent, watching her. At last he spoke slowly:

"Do you know you are beautiful there in that light?"

"It is my favorite pose; I have been told I look rather well here."

"Often, doubtless. Louise, how have you waited for this—for me?"

"Without much trouble, of course. I did not know for what I waited."

"If you had known, would you have waited?"

"Yes, I think I would choose you, off-hand, if all the dear departed were ranged beside you in the firelight."

"I am glad of that. It promises fewer complications in the future."

"I dare say most such partnerships are entered upon with the idea that they will last. The complications may come later. But let's be perfectly honest. I wonder if a man and woman could live together as man and wife and be honest with each other."

"Not for very long, I fancy."

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a spinster! But, as I am averse to the idea, let us say that, although our mating may not be for long, we will try to have it honest. Don't ask me to be true to you, body and soul, till I die. Three years from now, you may be mad over some other woman or I over some other man. Now comes my one condition before I agree to your stupendous proposition to take possession of me. We will make this our real marriage. I want you to swear to me here and now that when you become unduly interested in some woman, you will tell me of it, and I will promise the same.

Then, while we are mated, we will have no doubts, no bitternesses."

"By Jove! It sounds rather bewildering, but——"

"It is the only way. Then, in years to come, if you chose to caress me, I should know that I alone had your caresses."

He turned a dull red.

"But that is always supposed to be true."

"And seldom is."

"Your plan is unprecedented, as far as I know."

"Everything was unprecedented at some time—even marriage. I imagine the first marriage made quite a stir. You could say: 'Confound it, Louise, what you provided for has come. We've hit it off uncommonly well when you take it into consideration that we never had any love affair to start with.'"

"Oh, I say! Now you speak of it, we haven't, have we?" He did not see the color flash into her face; he was looking at the fire; and who shall say that in such case, all popular ideas to the contrary, a fire so attractive may not be a hindrance to true romance?

"Where was I?" asked Louise. "Then I would say: 'You think you've found the other woman. How long will it take you to be sure?' And you would ask if three months would be too long, and I would say that I could tell in less time if I really cared for any one."

"But do you care for any one? How about me?"

"At least there is no one dearer, and I am fond of you in a way."

"How fond? In what way?" He turned toward her suddenly, masterfully. Was it all the firelight that suffused for a moment the mask of her beautiful face? She moved from the fire and turned her face to him, electrifying him for one brief, bewildering moment. He reached out his arms, she drew back bafflingly; his arms fell futilely, awkwardly to his sides.

She laughed and he drew back, frowning. She said softly:

"I have disgusted you."

"Of course, you make it as hard as you can. Men would be squarer if women would let them. If you only knew it, this is not the first time I would dearly have loved to box your ears. Hang it! Why can't I talk to you as I could to another man?"

"Well, why can't you? Perhaps it's because I am a woman."

"You said something about our never having had any love affair. I wonder if any one should dare enter such a contract without some such preliminary."

"In this case, just wherein am I to blame? Should I have said: 'Monty, will you please have a little love affair with me?' If we must have one, let it be brief, for the fire is almost out."

He replenished the fire grimly.

"I have been disappointed in you to-night, Louise. I have watched for any sign of the feeling you should have, to square this, and there wasn't any to see. You made a jest of what, for a moment, I was fool enough to take for feeling. You always seemed the squarest girl I knew, but, for some reason, you are willing to tackle this stake which staggers me, now that I look at it squarely, and it isn't right, you know. When I started in to-night, I didn't know what I was saying half the time; I started half in jest, but it got too serious. In a case like this, there should not be so much of the serious, there should be more of the sentimental. We should fall down somewhere in our system, and not know so well every minute just where we stand. Confound it! You know what I mean; though you will not help me, and if you don't know, you ought not to be in this game."

"If you had been as much in earnest in the starting out of your wooing as you are in your efforts to extricate yourself from some imaginary dilemma, you

might have swept me off my feet. You have tackled a windmill and the same old winds are blowing, and there is plenty of grist. Women have agreed to this thing for all their future when they had no idea if they could stand it to live under the same roof, even world, without——"

"I know, and I have wondered at what seemed like the cold-blooded barter of womanhood to the highest bidder. Louise, you mustn't think that I have never wanted to caress you. Of course I have! But the idea never entered my head that I could till you belonged to me. But I did think that it would come naturally, as a matter of course, when once we talked it over. But I have grown to fear it, though you don't seem to be so troubled. We are starting in on a relationship which must assume the closest ties, while I have no idea what effect it would have on you of attraction or repulsion, you know. You are so quiet, and—forgive me—seemingly, at least, so cold."

Her face very white, she leaned forward and faced him squarely, her eyes on a level with his. His face as white as hers, he met her look, full and strong.

"Louise, against all this, do we dare go on? Do you think it would be right? Is there something I do not understand driving you into this?"

"Yes, there is something you do not understand."

He grew even whiter.

"Then you know, we ought to call it off. It would not be right to you, nor a fair show to me, to start with this handicap. That is what has been between us; that has kept me at arm's length, even when you must have known that I was half mad for love of you all these years, while you have been fluttering about from one to the other. It is that which has kept me silent and aloof at what cost you will never know, until, as a fool venture, I decided upon

my brilliant coup, only to find you seemingly willing to enter this monster bargain coolly, without any feeling. And I don't mind saying that you are not the woman I thought you were; which may help me in one way as much as its hurts in another. I tried to carry it out on the same lines, and find I cannot. We'll be friends, of course——"

"I don't see how you could think of being a friend to such a woman."

"Can you tell me what it is I don't understand?"

She was ghastly white; she swayed dizzily, and he caught her. But she recovered herself in a minute and stood away from him with a little laugh.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you just now." She shivered.

"It is unpardonably late. Your hands are icy—are you as cold as that?"

"Yes, the fire is out. Good night."

"When I came to-night I thought that when I went we would be engaged."

"Are we not?"

"You are laughing at me!" He tried to go on in the mood he thought she was in. "Shall I salute you with the betrothal kiss?" he asked ironically. She raised her white, icy lips and, blindly, in his utter stupefaction, he kissed her and stumbled from the house. He could not rid himself of that cold, characterless kiss; it burned him with a great disgust and hurt. He resolved that he would break away and go abroad alone. He wondered what was driving Louise into this mad game with him.

After a sleepless night, he called up her home early. Her maid said she had not slept till morning. He said not to wake her; he would call later.

He fell asleep to dream that some one was carrying Louise off; she would protest, escape, then fly on ahead, and beckon to her pursuer, who would catch her and carry her off again. Outraged and angry, he followed them to have the scene reenacted ceaselessly. At

last he caught them. The kidnaper was himself.

He slept till late afternoon, then went forth to tell her that he could go no farther with the farce. He found her in the living room with the family. With a delicate blush on her beautiful cheek, she held it for his lovelike salute, which, in a maze, he gave her. With a few words he never remembered, her mother greeted him. Her father offered an understanding hand and proffered his cigar case. Beryl was effusive; called him "brother," and begged for a big wedding at which she might come out. It was evidently too late to get out of it; and, though he felt trapped, he submitted to the situation with what grace he could command.

Louise decided that she would not go to South America, and so they sailed for Europe. The night was fine, and they stayed on deck till late. Monty went with her to her stateroom door, where he stooped as if to kiss her. She drew back, though almost imperceptibly. He said "good night," and waited for her to enter her room. Then he went on deck again. She had not slept when, hours later, she heard him enter his room. She wondered if he would have followed her into her room if she had kissed him. She did not think so; for whatever need she had of him, he had given her the outer shell of marriage, but, as for his manhood, he would keep that true to his ideals.

As she was anxious to go to Paris, which she loved, they did not stay long in England. But, before crossing with some acquaintances they had made on the boat, they visited the National Gallery in London. They were standing before Raphael's "Vision of a Knight," and one of the party was teasing Monty about Louise's infatuation for this young man. "The ladies are not so bad," said he. Just then a tall, dark, young man, with a lean, sinister face approached them

with an air of assurance and said easily:

"How de do, Louise?"

Monty thought that just for a minute she seemed to be at a loss; but she smiled him a welcome and he said:

"I was attracted by a familiar voice, which I knew, though I had not seen your face. I have not, however, had the pleasure of meeting your husband."

"Meet my husband, Montessoro Garland. Monty, this is George Downes."

"The last time I saw you, your husband was not with you," said Downes.

"Didn't you know they were on their honeymoon?" asked one of the ladies.

"No!" he cried. "They must be having a long-extended honeymoon, or it must have been long delayed."

They looked surprised, but as they were moving on, nothing was said. Monty was puzzled.

At the Louvre they saw Downes again. He joined them at once. Before Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," he said to Louise:

"You have always reminded me of her. Your face is as inscrutable; your eyes as unfathomable; your smile as full of conscious power and a knowledge of how to use it. A wise, wily, dangerous, voluptuous woman!"

"Really!" cried Louise airily. "You flatter me."

Of Da Vinci's "Madonna, Child, and St. Ann," this amazing young man said lightly:

"If seen to-day, these faces, so full of 'pep' and 'pash,' would be called vamps." Monty found him objectionable personally.

Louise said of Perugino's "Saint Sebastian":

"I love him! He makes me think of you, Monty."

"Especially by the arrow through the heart, I suppose," said Downes. "But in that he might remind you of any of your admirers."

Monty had walked on, and when Lou-

ise started to join him, Downes went with her. Monty was looking at Titian's "The Man with the Glove," Downes said: "This should be one of your favorites, as you said it reminded you of me."

"I am tired to death of it!" said Louise, and left them.

Monty said:

"It has a certain charm for me quite aside from its high artistic merit, because of the glove. Many interesting things have been done with gloves before now."

"Such as throwing down the gauntlet, perhaps?" said Downes.

"Exactly—or striking a man across the face with it," said Louise's husband, and if she had heard him she would have thought he needed to be looked after.

She had gone to look at "The Concert," by Giorgione, and, as Monty saw Downes hastening to join her, he did not hurry. As he drew near, he heard him likening Louise to the more prominent of the two beautiful nude figures. Monty's scalp tightened suddenly. He decided that each canvas noticed by Downes was cheapened by his attention, whether by look or opinion.

Monty was unhappy. He could not forget Louise's shrinking from him. He felt the quiver of her revulsion. Since that first attempt he had not approached her in any lovelike way, although he was racked by her beauty. He was obsessed by the situation and could think of nothing else. And now, this man had broken into the one thing they could enjoy together, their love for and appreciation of art. He was attaching himself to their little party.

In Italy, they went directly to Florence, where Downes joined them at once. It almost seemed that Louise must keep him posted as to their movements. Some friends named Gallini joined them there. They were speaking of the old Italian painters when Gallini

said: "Some wonderful men have sprung up in Italy. She is famous not only for her painters, poets, singers, and linguists, but for her men of might in adventure and arms—Columbus and Bonaparte."

"One of whom," said Monty, "is responsible, largely, for something which I see here as I have seen it elsewhere, and which I consider deplorable; that so many paintings are indifferently placed, and so insufficiently catalogued that their first intentions are not plainly told to the layman."

"They can't be 'Apollons,' with a private room in the Vatican!" said Downes.

"More of them would be well placed and, in fact, in the very places and lights meant for them, if it had not been for the unprecedented spoliation of Europe of her art treasures by Bonaparte."

Downes joined Louise at Fra Lippo Lippi's "Madonna with Child and Angels."

"She looks bored to death," he said. "She evidently did not care for children and looks tired of holding her hands so long in that devout posture. The boy is too large, don't you think? Ruskin said of Botticelli that he painted equally well the pagan or Christian, Aphrodite or Madonna. Fra Lippo Lippi would have used the same model, the fair Lucrezia. When he was painting a madonna for Nuns' Chapel he fell for this model and eloped with her. She always reminds me of you."

"But I don't see how I can look like the heroines of Fra Lippo Lippi. Botticelli, and Da Vinci!" said Louise.

"Ah! But it is there! There is something about you they have all caught from their models—an allurements, a mockery, a wisdom even in your naïveté." Later, at Botticelli's "Birth of Venus," Downes became still more personal as he likened her to it.

At the Academy, Downes was still their shadow, but that was Louise's affair. Monty thought he would be the

last one to interfere. There were times when he had thought she did not want him about. He had not expected that she would bring an affair, a hang-over, evidently well matured, right along with her on what was supposed to be her honeymoon. This was almost too much even for a good sport. And it was not like Louise; it lacked taste. She was a free lance; but if the affair amounted to anything, why did she not tell him of it? He waited, alert and keyed up to concert pitch, for her story. Each time she addressed him when they were alone, which was not often, he expected it.

They were in Rome when Downes likened Louise to Titian's "Artless Love."

"What—I, the alluring and voluptuous?" she asked, looking at the painting.

He seemed for the first time to be a little uneasy; but he followed her to Raphael's "Galatea," with about the same comment. To this she made no answer; but left him and joined Monty, and told him she was too tired to see any more.

In Dresden they studied Correggio. Downes had followed them there, also. When Monty heard him liken Louise to Giorgione's "Sleeping Venus," he said to him:

"I wonder if it is possible that you are annoying my wife."

"It seems hardly possible," said Downes, "since, if she had not been married to you, she would have married me."

They were going back to Paris, and from there to Egypt. Monty wondered if Downes would follow them there. He was doing a lot of thinking. He did not know what to make of Downes' astounding speech to him. He could not think of any time since his marriage when Louise could have had any desire to marry Downes. If she had, Monty thought he did not admire her taste. He objected to Downes in every way.

He studied the situation to see if this positive and unshakable distaste could come wholly from jealousy, and decided that he would have resented like attentions to any one in his care, and that if matters had been different between him and Louise, he would have dispensed with Downes' company long ago. He tried to imagine any of his friends offering any such attentions to Louise, and decided that, although some of them might spell more danger to him, he could not feel toward any of them the same disgust. When, for another test, he wondered how any of his acquaintances would feel, in his place, he decided that any of them would go him one better.

To strengthen this position, he recalled the fact that in Paris, the Montaignes had treated Downes with growing coldness; that in Rome, the Gallinis, who had accompanied them from Florence, had had an open rupture with him over a discussion of Italian art and the influence on art of the monastic orders; while, in Dresden, the Moores, some Irish friends who had joined them there, had openly snubbed him after one day's acquaintance. With this backing, Monty decided that it was not wholly a prejudice of his.

In Paris again, Monty and Louise visited the Arc de Triomphe, and looked down on the city below. Said Monty:

"A long time ago a guide jumped from here. Before jumping, he made a speech to the soldiers below. He said that he did it to defy common sense. He let himself down over the coping of the battlement, and made his speech from there, then flung himself down the ninety feet to the pavement below."

Louise was horror-stricken. She knew that Monty was unhappy. Was he contemplating the fate of the guide? She said:

"How spectacular! He must have had a complex. An Irishman would

have put off his speech to the guard till he arrived at the bottom among them. I am tired; will you take me back?"

They made a farewell visit to the Louvre. Downes was there. Strangely enough, he and Monty found themselves alone by "The Man With the Glove." Monty was ugly and growing more so. He was studying the painting, and, after a little, he heard Downes saying: "I have a rare gift; I can see very clearly any one's form. Now, Louise is a——"

He had another rare gift. It was presented by Monty, and fitted snugly under his jaw, lifting it awkwardly. He went to the floor and stayed there a while.

"Come away," said Monty to Louise, who had come up and stood looking down at Downes thoughtfully.

"No," said she. "I like to see him that way. Do you suppose he is dead?"

"I don't know and I don't give a damn!" said her husband.

"I do," said Louise. "I hope he is not quite dead."

That evening, en route, they sat on the deck, watching the water idly. Louise felt in a friendly mood and moved her chair a bit nearer Monty; but he took no notice whatever of this overture. She dropped a corner of her rug; he stooped and wrapped it about her carefully, and, in the operation, pushed her chair away a little. She hitched it back. Monty moved his chair to the railing, looking like a man who might jump overboard any minute.

"I never saw a more beautiful picture than the new masterpiece I saw in the Louvre to-day," said Louise conversationally.

He was politely interested.

"What was it? I don't recall anything new that impressed me as having any special beauty or value."

"You didn't get the right view. It

was that lovely uppercut of yours on the jaw of that impudent boor."

"Oh! I thought you seemed anxious, for fear that he was dead."

"For your sake. If you killed him, they'd call it manslaughter."

Monty contemplated the sea, which has doubtless been subjected to more such scrutiny than any other part of the earth's anatomy. He cut the end carefully from a cigar, then threw the cigar overboard, and looked with interest at the end left in his hand.

"I didn't know you could do anything like that so easily," said Louise.

"It was perfectly simple—I used to do a little punching of a bag at college, and the boys used to put on the gloves once in a while."

"He will not follow us to-day."

"Hardly; his dentist will keep him out of the limelight for a while."

"Then you think you broke something?"

"I don't think there is the least doubt of it. I also split my glove."

"Oh, may I have the glove?"

"Certainly," he replied, a little amused. "That clip wasn't altogether to the bad, you know, where a chap has had no chance to keep his hand in. I'm not half ashamed of it, you know. Really, on the whole, it wouldn't have been too much of a disgrace to an incipient aspirant for the tanbark and the manly art."

After a little Louise said:

"He was the cause of my marrying you."

"Indeed? I am in his debt! I'm afraid I have requited him unduly."

"I married you to get rid of him."

"I couldn't blame you for doing anything desperate for that reason; but it did not seem to have the desired effect. But I'm getting interested; would it bore you to go on? The night is fine, don't you think?" He lighted a cigar, and she saw his hand tremble. She loved Monty's hands. A man's hands ought

not to tremble. Once that day his hand had not trembled. A hand that could do that ought not to tremble at the lighting of a cigar. There was something the matter with Monty. Perhaps he was smoking too much; but she would no sooner try to take a cigar away from him than she would try to take raw meat from a bear.

She broke the silence.

"This man had annoyed me for years. When I was at Smith, his sister had him up for a dance. He was the best dancer I ever danced with. That ought to be enough to say, and you ought to understand it, but you don't, and you never will. If you had been a dancer, you would have met him probably; but you couldn't dance on a bet, and I'm glad of it, for it must be the epitome of stupidity to dance with one's husband; and I am tired of dancing.

"His sister was going to Yale to junior prom with one of his classmen, and he invited me. I never could resist a dance with him, but I never danced with him without feeling contaminated by it. It was something more than a dance, as I understood dancing; it was a consciousness of an inner something quite aside from the quiet rhythm of the dance and the beat of the music.

"It was a mental contamination—a debauch of intense feeling. It was inside him, a rite, a ceremonial to his gods and deities who were unreal and terrible; as if fiends and devils were sporting in his body, from whom I could not get away! And he danced so quietly that no one would ever know. The dance—the awful rhythm and swing were all inside him, a crushing, breaking force. I have thought that he had mesmeric powers, and used them unconsciously.

"He sang. I have never heard such a voice! I hope I shall never hear it again, or such another. Still, if he should sing, and I should hear him, I know I should sit spellbound, every

other sense dead, my whole consciousness in my hearing, and listen to him till I wept, cursed, and all but swooned in a prayer for release.

"How I kept from marrying him I cannot tell, save that the marriage rite has never to my knowledge been performed while the couple was dancing, or while the groom was vocalizing and the bride swooning as an audience. The last time he came to me and asked me, or commanded me, to marry him, he expected to go away for some years, and he wanted me to go with him. I was panic-stricken, for I had never been able to discourage him. It was of no use to say 'no,' and there was no snubbing him.

"At the very thought I was filled with a horror that I cannot tell you. I would as soon have married a leper. He was a moral leper, a social parasite. In my strait I fastened on the only thing I could think of quickly enough. I told him that I could not possibly marry him, as I was already married. I thought, as he was going away, he would never know the difference. He asked me whom I had married, and I immediately told him the name of the only one of whom I had ever thought in that rôle, the only man I had ever loved or who had ever entered my visions as a husband.

"All might have gone well, and this imposition on you might never have happened, but he did not go away. I saw him again; he called me by the name I had told him; and that very night you made your astounding proposal to me, seemingly in jest—but I thought it was a way out. When you said you cared so much for me, I couldn't say that I cared as much—I could not tell you anything. I felt driven to carry it out as we had started it, and I have tried to do so since, though I have suffered—and have made you suffer when I would die to save you pain. That is the woman you have mar-

ried to save her from that—— I wonder——" She was crying.

Monty had just lighted a fresh cigar. He threw it over the rail, where it formed rather a neat parabola and trailed off into infinity to lose its fire in the sea. He looked at his watch, at the sky, at Louise. She had left off crying to watch him. She was in a panic of sweet fear; her heart was beating madly. He turned toward her and she stood up suddenly as if pluming for flight, her rug dragging after her in long, heavy, reaching folds.

He wrapped it about her gently and picked it up with her in it, and carried her toward the rail swiftly. Could he, after all, be going mad? He looked at the stars, at the moon, at the sea.

"Friends," he said, addressing the

night at large, "the hour has struck during which my wife and I will rehearse a little ceremonial, after which I shall devote some time to making love to her. But, first, she must do her little parlor tricks! Now, Mrs. Garland, don't be frightened or bashful, but tell the world how much you love your husband."

"A very great deal," said Louise.

"That is not enough. How much—or here you go!" with a sweeping motion toward the sea.

"More than any one in the world!" she cried.

"More!" cried Monty. "Or overboard! Think quick!"

"More than everybody and everything in the world!" said she desperately, at which Monty set her gently on her feet.



SONG OF THE EVERGREENS AND ONE OTHER

THE larch has sung: "The dazzling snow
Is lovely, but it melts too soon;
Less cold and cloying is the glow
Of the capricious moon."

The spruce has sung: "The April shower
Is lovely, but too boisterous;
Calmer the dew; though brief its hour,
Its freshness is miraculous."

The fir has sung: "The summer breeze
Is lovely, but it comes unasked;
More subtle are the stars, for these
Resist me and are masked."

Were I the larch or spruce or fir,
I do not think that I would search
For moon or dew or stars, but her
Who was the slimmest silver birch.

RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER.



The Pink Mole

By Ned McIntosh

OUR hero—any one is a hero who can undertake to substitute the movies for a dozen years' hard and fast drinking—our hero paused in front of "The World's Biggest Theater, Motion Pictures and Grand Opera," and debated with himself. For him, as for many another since the arrival of the great drought, the condition of being all dressed up with no place to go had become too constant and remorseless a fact to be fraught with much of its ancient humor.

This modern alliance of Thespian aristocracy and proletariat emblazoned upon the cliffsides of bedlam offered scant comfort. His interest in the movies heretofore had been something less than casual and the additional prospect of hearing an effete band of chorus men sing the "Stein Song" armed only with mugs of sarsaparilla thrilled him not in the least. The convivial faces and forces for which our hero yearned died a natural, if protesting, death about the time Broadway's more prominent bars went into curio-shop and freak-show business.

"The times are certainly out of joint! I'll say so!" sighed our Hamlet. He made the decision and fluttered a bill under the plate-glass partition to a blond young lady with the bloom of the corner drug store upon her cheeks. She interrupted his soliloquy:

"Ten cents more, dearie. We don't entertain you and pay your taxes, too. The poor government with its half-a-million hired help must live, you know!"

"Yeah, I know," he grumbled, digging for the change. "They take away our booze and then make us pay for doing without it."

"You sure said it, dearie! Picture a queen like me, used to nothin' but wine, tryin' to be happy on one-half of one per!"

The queen on her glass-walled throne, recognizing before her now a man of discernment, bestowed upon him a gleaming smile.

"What's a fellow going to do about it? I'd like some bright person to tell me."

"Search me, dearie, but you can't stand there and hold up the line all night. You might get married and devote yourself to raising a large family."

As Rickie Lanagan, then, entered the twilight of the theater, he was greeted by a view of the Ladies' Uplift Society, uplifting a former barroom via the ice-cream-soda route while the orchestra moaned "How Dry I Am!" He ignored the insult and resigned himself to six reels of Betty Beaucaire and Gerald Fitzgerald.

The story was trite and tritely told, but Rickie found his interest strangely intrigued from the first. Presently he became aware that it was Betty Beaucaire and not the story that interested him. Betty's golden locks were a trifle more elaborately arranged than those of most country girls Rickie could remember, perhaps, but in her piquant face there was something that stirred him vaguely. There was an appealing wistfulness in her smile, and each vivacious gesture was captivating. But, transcend-

ing these, an intangible spirit fanned old memories. Rickie's fancy roamed back through the vista of the years. In a distant town of two decades ago his memory's eye picked up a well-remembered face. It was that of a laughing girl, and he smiled whimsically at the vision.

There may have been just a tingle of regret in that smile. Time was when that regret burned and hurt every time Rickie thought of Marjorie West. It was such a trivial matter that had parted their paths—a sweetheart's foolish quarrel, and then, in a fit of pique, she dashed away with a scamp of a young actor for a husband upon three days' acquaintance. By the time a man has come forty years a bachelor he has, or should have, learned to look with some degree of complacency upon the quips and quirks of Fate. And so had Rickie Lanagan. But for the moment keen reminiscences brought old ghosts trooping back.

"I wonder where she is and whether she is happy," Rickie mused.

As if in answer to his silent query the girl on the screen, by a freak chance of photography, looked directly into Rickie's eyes and smiled so frankly that it seemed really personal. It startled Rickie into the sensing of a queer possibility. There was never but one smile like that. He leaned forward, gripping the back of the seat in front of him, and studied the face of the girl in the picture intensely.

"By George! Could it be possible—I wonder?"

Rickie Lanagan's utterance was so audible that the old lady sitting at his elbow looked at him sharply and drew away slightly as if she suspected he might be a bit off his mental balance, but Rickie didn't even know that he had spoken. He was absorbed in every subtle mannerism and fleeting nuance of this girl. They were not Betty Beaucaille's, but Marjorie West's.

Was the possibility too absurd to con-

sider? He himself was no longer the slender boy of two decades ago, and the time had decorated his temples with a dash of gray. Was it reasonable to believe that time had been kinder to Marjorie? Yet, in the veins of Rickie Lanagan, who had made no effort to keep young, the fires and urges of youth were surging at that very moment.

As the picture drew to a close, a circumstance revealed itself which shattered any doubt Rickie may have had and left a vivid, living reality which he could not escape. The girl nestled in the arms of her lover in a final close-up view, and on the back of her soft white neck was the little pink mole which Rickie used to long to kiss!

"It is she! It is Marjorie West, just as sure as I am Rickie Lanagan!" he said excitedly to himself.

He sat through the remainder of the program, waiting for the big six-reeler to begin all over. There was more in his purpose than merely to see the girl again; he wanted the name and address of her company, which appeared with the title announcement.

Rickie sat up late that night. Toward dawn he delivered himself of the following, which he mailed to Miss Betty Beaucaille, care of the Famous Stars Picture Corporation, Garden City, Long Island:

DEAR BETTY BEAUCAILLE: May a boy of twenty years ago thank you for a little journey into the Land of Used-To-Be and a brief hour with the girl who once dwelt there? This, no doubt, sounds quite silly to you—naturally, you would not understand unless you had known the girl—but you can accept it at least as a tribute to your art.

I am beginning to understand why they build palaces for the movies. In these drab days, do love and romance live only there? I wonder!

RICKIE LANAGAN.

Rickie flattered himself that he had written a rather discreet epistle. He felt a boyish pride in the ingenuity of it. If the ancient spark still smoldered, she would understand the unwritten

message. If it really were not Marjorie or she had forgotten, it was of small consequence what she might think.

Four impatient days passed, and then an envelope with a Garden City postmark brought back to Rickie his own letter. Across the face of his writing were traced these words in a girlish hand:

I wonder, too! Why don't you come and see?

That was all, except a residence address in a lower corner. But it was enough!

Thundering out from under Manhattan Isle, the train pulled in at the little doll's house of a station at Garden City. Rickie hailed a taxi and gave the driver an address. The machine scuttled around half-a-dozen corners and fetched up in front of a white-stucco bungalow, cameled by cathedral elms and a green lawn. As Rickie strode up the gravel walk, old-fashioned flowers on either side bore his fancy back to flowers he remembered in another yard long ago.

A maid responded to Rickie's ring at the door.

"Is Miss Beaucaire in?" Rickie had no idea it would be so difficult to articulate so simple a question, and, having outed with it he found himself as excited as a debutante at her coming-out party. He was to be disappointed for the nonce, however.

"No, sir," replied the maid. "Miss Beaucaire is at the studio this morning, but if she is expecting you, it isn't far. You might run over there."

Rickie was almost breathless when he arrived at the studio. He entered the big, rambling building, where once more he repeated his consuming desire to see Miss Betty Beaucaire. A brass-buttoned youngster ushered him into a cozy ante-room.

"This is Miss Beaucaire's reception room," explained Buttons blithely. "Just take a seat with the rest of 'em."

There was a disturbing hint of lack of respect in the tone of his voice which puzzled Rickie. A nondescript group of other visitors in the room added to his dismay. The boy went out.

Rickie had never seen such a motley and absurd-looking lot. One pompous gentleman of dubious years held a large bouquet which partly covered an expanse of white vest. A nervous little man with slickly plastered hair was constantly shifting a thin flat package—unquestionably a photograph and probably of himself. Another bore candy, and a fourth with baggy knees and a hunted look in his eyes suggested a large family and a small salary. Rickie seated himself tenuously upon the edge of a wicker chair and waited impatiently. Presently Buttons returned and made a ridiculous and pompous bow.

"Miss Beaucaire isn't receiving today," he announced. "She thanks you all for calling, but says she's too busy with her new picture to see you, and asks to be excused."

As the disappointed visitors filed out, Rickie felt as if he were taking part in a farce comedy. It was not clear to him just what sort of a situation he had bumped into, but one thing was quite apparent, and that was that Miss Beaucaire, not having been apprised of his particular presence, naturally could not know that he was there. He lingered behind the departing suitors.

"Now, listen to me, sonny, you don't understand. I have a letter from Miss Beaucaire," he explained.

"That won't get you anywhere, mister," grinned the youth. "All these guys have got letters from her. That's why they're here."

"You mean she answered the mash notes of all these boobs and they fell for it?"

"Sure! It helps her business."

"Oh, I begin to understand," said Rickie, as a blush of outraged confidence crept up under his collar.

"Yes, sir; it's fairly simple," Buttons conceded.

"What kind of a fool does she take me for, anyway?" muttered Rickie.

Outside on the pavement, Rickie paused a moment, digesting the ludicrous humiliation he had endured. He strolled in silence.

"Duped again! And after twenty years!" he said finally. "And nothing left to do but charge up the experience to profit and loss."

He took the letter from his pocket once more and was about to tear it to bits, but changed his mind abruptly. He had halted in front of another entrance to the studio. Over the lintel was a sign bearing the words: ARTISTS' ENTRANCE.

"By heavens! There's one thing else left to do," he determined. "If that smart young woman is in this studio, she's going to know what I think before I come out of here."

A narrow hallway led him through a tier of dressing rooms, and presently he found himself in the great, glass-roofed studio itself. Lined the length of the big, barnlike space were half-a-dozen sets of flimsy scenery, each enclosing its group of gesticulating actors and actresses. Coatless directors shouted orders. Stagehands shifted scenery about. In the midst of the seething activity Rickie passed from scene to scene unnoticed.

Through a disguise of paint and powder he recognized after a while the object of his quest. With her were the same familiar figures he had seen in the picture at the theater. In fact, at that very moment the versatile hero, his sleeves rolled up and his loose white shirt picturesquely open at the throat, was dealing to the villain his accustomed trouncing. The girl of the screen, unperturbed by the havoc she had just wrought in real life, watched the slaughter with nicely balanced make-believe of terror and adoration.

"Lucretia Borgia's ghost!" exclaimed Rickie.

Discretion fled at the thought of the humiliation he had suffered. Without pausing to consider the embarrassing consequences of the commotion he was about to stir up, he strode into the scene. When the director had recovered from an instant's surprise at this strange and unexpected character stalking into the action, his face turned purple with rage.

"Hey, you!" shouted that individual, waving a menacing fistful of manuscripts. "Who the heck do you think you are? Get to Hades out of this picture, will you?"

Rickie scarcely heard the words.

"Miss Beaucaire," he said, "I want to talk with you, and I want to talk with you at once."

The actress shrank toward the protection of her white-shirted hero. The sight of him made Rickie's blood boil. Before he realized what he was doing, his fist had sought that limpid brown eye for which it itched. The camera man cleared for action. Cohorts of stagehands and carpenters rushed in, and recruits from other scenes gathered into a small army.

When the walls and people quit wheeling around, Rickie, a very disheveled and battered person, found himself being hustled toward the door in most ignominious fashion by two husky stage carpenters. His protests and efforts at explanation fell upon ears of stone.

Outside, his captors hailed a policeman, who inquired amiably as he sauntered up:

"Well, what y'got here, boys?"

"Jack Dempsey on his day off," replied one of the stagehands,

"Just walked right in and tried to land a knock-out on Miss Beaucaire's husband," enlightened the second stage carpenter. It was quite as much news to Rickie as to the policeman.

"Miss Beaucaire's husband!" ex-

claimed the newly surprised captive. "You don't mean that blond he-doll is her husband?"

"Sure as shootin', and I'm thinkin' you'll be ready to believe it when the judge gets through with you."

Here plainly was a situation which demanded immediate solution.

"Now, let me explain, officer—" began Rickie.

"Old stuff!" laughed the policeman. "You can tell that to the judge!"

It did not relieve Rickie's feelings when Miss Beaucaire and her leading man, Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald, came out the door and called a passing taxi. Rickie's performance evidently had ended the day's work. The policeman tipped his hat, and the actor acknowledged the salutation with:

"Don't let that chap bite you, Pat."

Rickie did some quick thinking. If he could gain this superior person's attention long enough to make a clean breast of the affair he might be able to extricate himself. Even if he did not succeed, he might gain the vengeful satisfaction of introducing a few matters for Miss Beaucaire to explain to her husband. Rickie smothered his pride.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," he began. "I've evidently made somewhat of a fool of myself. I'd like to offer a sort of explanation."

"Cut out that chatter," ordered the policeman, tightening his grip on Rickie's arm.

But the opportunity for a display of magnanimity and the urge of a woman's curiosity pleaded for Rickie.

"Let's see what he's got to say, dear," begged the actress.

"All right," acceded Fitzgerald. "Never mind, officer. Let him speak up."

"First, I want you to read this letter, which will explain itself," said Rickie, handing over the troublesome epistle. "And then, I'll do a little explaining on my own account."

"You see, when I called and found out I had been victimized, and that by a married woman—" Rickie began.

But Betty Beaucaire had finished reading the letter and was laughing so heartily that the tears came into her eyes.

"Shall I take him out of his misery, Jerry?" she asked.

"By all means."

The little actress drew close to Rickie, daintily stuffed the crumpled note into his coat pocket, and caught him by the lapels.

"You poor, forlorn boy!" she said, looking into his eyes. "I'll tell you a secret. My dear, widowed mother answers all the notes I get. That's the way she helps me. But she wasn't thinking of me when she wrote that letter, and she didn't write any like it to any of the others."

"Your dear, widowed mother!" A great light was dawning on Rickie. "Did you say widowed?"

"I said widowed," she answered.

The taxi stood panting at the curb. One quick dash, and Rickie was free from his captors. With another bound he unceremoniously bowled the driver from his seat and was off down the street in a cloud of dust.

At sunset Rickie stood on the back porch of the little white-stucco bungalow. He gazed out over the emerald haze of a luxuriant vineyard. The girl who stood beside him and held his hand was nearly forty, but the happiness and pink of girlhood was still in her face.

"It looks as if we are going to have a fine crop of grapes this season," said Rickie.

"If you think another glass of my home-made wine would help your poor battered eye, I'll run get it for you," replied the girl.

"Thank you, Mrs. Lanagan," said Rickie. And he leaned over and kissed a little pink mole on the back of her neck.

Ainslee's Books of the Month

TALES OF MY NATIVE TOWN, by Gabrielle D'Annunzio; Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

IF D'Annunzio had not gone to Fiume, his group of short stories about his native town of Pescara would have been allowed to repose in the Italian—at least, so far as an American edition was concerned. Assuming that that is a correct statement, let us thank the gods that he went to Fiume and thereby further advertised his astounding personality.

The volume in front of me, translated by Professor Rafael Mantellini and prefaced by Joseph Hergesheimer, contains some of the best short stories that I have read in any language. They are far removed, undoubtedly, from the Anglo-Saxon conception of fiction. Realistic, cruel, and not a little decadent, they are bound to startle all but the sophisticated few. We need to be startled, however, in a country where our best sellers are what they are and the "Pollyanna" idea passes as a philosophy.

Consider the story entitled "The Virgin Anna." It is a merciless study of an epileptic peasant woman. She is followed from birth to her end in a convent, where the good nuns have come to believe that, since she is both fanatical and demented, she must be some sort of saint. A painful theme, perhaps. But it is treated with artistry of the first order.

"The Countess of Amalfi" is not merely the tale of a bizarre infatuation, with a peculiarly acid finale. It is a satire on the social life of Pescara. The author mentions a large number of citizens by name, including a D'Annunzio

and a Rapagnetta. This is interesting, because it has been newspaper gossip that the poet was born with the plebeian name of Rapagnetta and made up the fine-sounding "Annunzio"—literally, the "announcer," or "herald"—as a *nom de plume*. It is not true. He has every right to the name he uses. But evidently there are Rapagnettas also in Pescara.

"The Death of the Duke of Ofena"—but the above few paragraphs must serve, instead of the pages I could write about this Italian masterpiece.

W. A. R.

RESPONSIBILITY, by James E. Agate; George H. Doran Company, New York.

TO "Responsibility," his first novel, James Evershed Agate, for seven years dramatic reviewer on the *Manchester Guardian*, has brought the equipment, in style and point of view, of the so-called "destructive" critic. One scents the essayist, the phrase maker, the epigrammatist and aphorist, rather than the story-teller, the plot maker, the weaver of tales. The author peeps not shyly from the obscuring foliage of incident, situation, character. He holds forth boldly and openly. He is the character and the situation and the incident. As, on reading the self-conscious reactions of an unintimidated critic, one feels he knows its author rather better, perhaps, than the piece in point, so on putting away "Responsibility" one is left with a knowledge of Agate—an acquaintance with him not in the general sense that one knows Wells or the Bennett Agate continually quotes, but with an acute knowledge of the man's personality, his prejudices,

his small idiosyncrasies, and great egotisms.

Agate points no moral in his story of the man who never learns of his son's existence until the young man appears to him late in life. Worldly wisdom, common sense, opposes such marriages as that with Clare, the son's mother, and renunciation is preached for dolts. And Agate dismisses discussion of his theme with: "So that we come to the weighing of the injury to Clare against the existence of that fine, sensitive creature of our fashioning—a weighing in the balance which is altogether too brainsickly."

But the theme as stated by its author enters the novel only a chapter or two before the book's close, and the pathos of the hero who "neglected the one logical end of man's existence—the handing on of the will to live," leaves us cold, for its very suddenness. More truly the theme is the author's alleged, and probably very real, contempt for second-hand experience, with his insistence on his capability for emotion. And more truly the tragedy is the obviousness of the author's reliance for romance on literature. In an introduction which Agate calls the last chapter, put first that the reader may not skim the book to "find out how it ends," and which is really a litany, the author confesses that he prefers the expression of the world to the world itself, that he "adores all acting, all masks and subterfuges, all cloaks and garbs of respectability." It is evident in his work that his desire to experience the reality of emotion is always killed by his fear of the banality of that emotion. One finds him struggling with the fear that he is feigning an emotion

to fool himself, coming, at last, to the conclusion he reaches in an earlier book: "The artist pretends to ordinary emotions that he may write of them extraordinarily."

It is obvious that to Agate words are the texture of life—a lucky phrase, a fantastic turn, an exquisite passage—rapture and intoxication. But his alertness and keenness save him from the slough of mere sound. Nor does he dislike the idea. It is only that to him the intonation and the gesture and the flavor are of so much more importance. That to his malice he occasionally brings politeness detracts no more from his power than does the formlessness of "Responsibility" make it either tiresome or obscure. His wit is of the French—the man is unmistakably a Francophile—but his humor, even when kindly, is never annoying. Above all, the fun he pokes at himself is never gentle.

"Responsibility" is an *apéritif*. And it is of those books from which one recites passages as surely as Agate himself calls up emotions he considers requisite for the occasion, ordinarily inherent in it, by quoting from his own favorites. With his introduction into English of the words *cocasse* and *ke-mach*, the last a bit of Hamburg slang, he has filled a want.

In stressing the Agate love for words one may be doing the man an injustice, since he is lacking neither in brave appreciation nor pretty subtlety. To those of us to whom the romantic Tom Sawyer, who manufactured his adventures, means more than the Huck Finn, to whom they came naturally, James Agate, with his first novel, stands immediately in the first rank of English writers.

MARGARET LEE.





In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

National Institutions

ALL'S practically well with the world; the "Follies" has had its presentation. Once again, on a moonlit midsummer's evening, the diligent Mr. Ziegfeld obliged with his annually expected theatrical offspring, and, judging by the advance sales, both are doing perfectly splendidly. Nightly, the cheering citizens wedge themselves into the New Amsterdam Theater to pay tribute—and four dollars and forty cents apiece—to the most widely advertised of our national institutions, the only dangerous rival of baseball and profiteering as an all-American sport. For the sake of the rhetorical effect, let us repeat that the "Follies" has had its presentation. The great event has crashed into civic history, and the local nervous strain is again down to normal. Now, at last, we can sit restfully back and call it a season.

This year's "Follies" is in the nature of a dancing carnival. Terpsichore, who, it is safe to say, is the only one of the muses who has ever been heard of on Broadway, where, by the way, they pronounce her name to rhyme with "more"—Terpsichore heads the list of "Follies" patronesses. Those muses who preside so efficiently over song and comedy—I should be only too glad to mention names and give the girls a little publicity, but some one has bor-

rowed the "Mus to Nal" volume of our encyclopedia, and I'm practically helpless without it—must have been away for the week-end while the entertainment was in the process of construction.

The songs are of the "love" and "kissed by moonlight from above," and "her style is neater, her smile is sweeter" school of lyrics, set to tunes strikingly like those contained in "A Garland of Pianoforte Pieces for Ten Busy Little Fingers." Last season, the "Follies" supplied a generous percentage of the most popular numbers in the repertoires of the local orchestras, but this year none of the songs can be retained even long enough to be whistled under the next morning's shower. Irving Berlin, it is true, has done an amusing syncopated scene and an effective finale, but neither contains any strain that you will strive to reproduce, by ear, on the living-room upright.

Even Eddie Cantor, who makes a brief appearance in the last act, succumbs to the prevailing influence and renders two notably poisonous selections, in particular a burlesque Spanish song. Some day somebody will revise the penal code to include all those writing burlesque Spanish songs, and then this country will be the greatest one on earth.

Well, anyway, a few good songs would undoubtedly help the show along greatly—not, of course, that the "Follies" needs or has ever needed any help, but just to give the audience something to remember the evening by.

But, as for the dancing, that is indubitably something else again. Carl Randall, who is so mercifully unlike the usual male ingénue of the revue stage, dances amazingly and does it as if it were really no trouble at all, and Mary Eaton improves on the hit she made last year as a dancer in "The Royal Vagabond." She has taken to singing, also, this season. Well, it was, I suppose, to be expected; so many of our prominent feminine dancers seem to have a curious prima-donna complex. Miss Eaton's voice is the usual ballroom soprano.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the evening is the eccentric dancing of Jack Donahue, whose name had had little or no publicity in connection with the entertainment, but who carried off the majority of the honors. He proved to be, as you might say, the Harding of the occasion. Bernard Granville, though he has, unfortunately, little dancing to do, still throws in an odd step here and there, and the more strenuous member of a team called Mack and Moran contributes some acrobatic dancing, mostly done on his shoulder blades. The "Follies" is, in short, a sort of Terpsichorean field day.

The local press worked itself up considerably, in the advance notices, over the fact that James Montgomery was doing the book for the "Follies," but it develops that there was nothing in that for any one to run a temperature about. Writing a book for the "Follies" seems to be about as profitable an occupation as furnishing flannel petticoats for the showgirls. The management's method of procedure is evidently to hire some well-known man to write the book, and then, as soon as it is written, to give

it away to some deserving family, and go out and engage an assortment of specialty acts.

There remains in the finished product of the "Follies" but one scene of Mr. Montgomery's. This is a little thing called "Creation," treating of the birth of Eve, and employing such characters as "The Slenderness of the Reed," "The Bloom of the Flower," and "The Timidity of the Hare." Undoubtedly, the management had the right idea about the rest of the book, if that was the way it was inclined.

In the line of comedy, fond memory seems softly to whisper that last year's offering had it irrefutably over this season's. True, the current edition has an enormously funny motoring skit, with W. C. Fields, Fannie Brice, and Ray Dooley, and there are several songs sung by the invaluable Miss Brice. She is, in fact, the bright light of the show, and when she leaves the stage it is almost more than one can do to keep from shedding tears. But her scenes are pitifully few, and there is not much else to laugh at. Bert Williams' absence is painfully conspicuous.

Ray Dooley and Charles Winninger have but little to be funny about, and a team of black-faced comedians has even less, although they do not appear to realize it. Van and Schenck put their songs over so skillfully that it isn't until their act is all done that you realize what extremely indifferent songs they are. Now, while John Steele is singing, on the other hand, you are never fooled for a moment.

But, of course, all this is beside the issue, as the saying goes. The real point of the production, as it is of every "Follies," is the girls. And the girls are there in luxuriant profusion, not, perhaps, so much in evidence as in former seasons; not, certainly so flatteringly equipped as to costumes and Urban backgrounds as of late years; and not, unfortunately, rising above the ab-

sence of Marilyn Miller, the Fairbanks twins, and Dolores, but still undeniably there, in all senses of the word. So the success of the "Follies of 1920" may be set down as complete.

"The Scandals of 1920," produced by George White at the Globe Theater, is the second annual installment of what shows every sign of becoming another national institution. Mr. White's offering shows him to be a young man of almost Ziegfeldian accuracy in the choice of girls and settings, and of a prettily childlike naïveté in his selection of humorous scenes. While one does not quite like to go so far as to proclaim that the "Scandals" contains some of the first jokes ever written, it is surely not overstating the case to say that it contains a goodly quota of the second-known batch. William Jennings Bryan, rent profiteering, the Mexican situation, and prohibition are satirized with much the same subtlety that characterizes the work of the Hippodrome troupe of trick elephants.

Of course, humor is all in the eye of the beholder, and it would doubtless be an even rougher world than it is at present if we all laughed at the same things; nevertheless, it sometimes seems to me that if I have to hear one more joke on near-beer, I would just as soon end it all then and there. I was once as good as sold on the eighteenth amendment, but now that I have seen what it has done to our stage, I cannot help wondering if, after all, there has not been a terrible mistake.

But this, it seems, is just a personal bias, for the "Scandals" audiences practically have to be carried from the theater, so limp and helpless are they from prolonged laughing over the prohibition waggeries.

The mainstay of the "Scandals" is Ann Pennington, dancing indefatigably, and also singing, roughly speaking. There is disappointingly little of George White's own dancing, for he appears

for only a few minutes at the end. A lady, named, for no obvious reason, La Sylphe, gives her conception of the poetry of motion by lying down on the floor and twining a foot tenderly around her neck.

There is a bevy of energetic comedians, headed by Lou Holtz, a black-faced artist who succeeds in being sustainably vulgar without once being funny, which is no mean feat. George Bickel is in a bad way for material; whoever wrote his lines, particularly those he delivers while impersonating Bryan, should even now be doing time up the fair, blue Hudson.

A pretty touch is the introduction of four showgirls, wearing, instead of tights, coats of fresh and glistening paint, some of which they smear off with their hands, to show the audience that there is no deception. And yet, there are those who say that the American stage has not advanced artistically!

After the "Scandals" and the "Follies," there is nothing, at the present writing, for the student of the drama but nonmusical exhibits. Of these, it is a little difficult to speak, owing to the cruel changes that a few brief weeks can work on Broadway. Even now, "An Innocent Idea," at the Fulton, is in a serious condition; while there is an ominous pallor about "The Fall and Rise of Susan Lenox," at the Forty-fourth Street Theater. There are grave indications that, by the time the magazine comes out, they are liable to be but memories. Perhaps, indeed, it would be safe to write about them in the past tense.

"An Innocent Idea" started out as if it were going to be a big evening. But, early in the second act, something seemed to slip, and from then on the suffering was intense. Martin Brown, the author, began to burlesque the bedroom farces, but, before he was fairly started, evidently tired of the idea and just wrote down anything that came

into his head. The result is a sort of dramatized bad dream, with people rushing madly about, shouting, slamming doors, getting into wrong beds, climbing through windows, misplacing their outer clothes, and then abruptly disappearing and giving place to an assortment of unexplained other people, who go through the same maneuvers. Robert Emmet Keane leads the cast in its hysterical dash through the piece.

"The Fall and Rise of Susan Lenox" was, according to the program, dramatized by George Hobart from the book by the late David Graham Phillips. One is deeply indebted to the program for this information, for otherwise one would never have known. Mr. Hobart has discarded everything about the novel but its name, only using that, doubtless, for the prestige it attained through the book's having been banned by the public libraries.

It might seem a bit free, to take the name of a deeply earnest, though perhaps somewhat tiresome, book by a dead man, and calmly attach it to an entirely foreign dramatic *opus*; but it is evidently considered by Mr. Hobart to be all in the day's work. His play resolved itself into a series of extraordinarily hackneyed episodes in the extraordinarily persecuted life of an extraordinarily virtuous heroine, played by an extraordinarily poor company.

It is a little brighter to turn toward the Playhouse, which shelters "Seeing Things," the farce by Margaret Mayo and Aubrey Kennedy, but the brightness is by no means dazzling. It may be that the fault lies in a defective notion of the truly humorous, yet it does seem as if the suffering of a young husband who believes his wife to have been drowned is not the most uproarious of spectacles. However, this is doubtless captious; most of the audience considers the idea a perfectly screaming one. That the lines seem to be a trifle flat is no drawback whatever.

Frank McIntyre is the leading comedian, and devotees of Frank McIntyre, like those of all other stout comedians, do not consider it necessary for him to be supplied with amusing lines. They laugh loyally at whatever he says, even before he has finished saying it. The cast includes John Westley and Dorothea Mackaye.

There is a delicate air about the attraction now at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater, and I fear that it is not long for this world. Deborah Bierne's Irish Players are there, dispensing anti-British propaganda, in the form of three one-act plays. It seems that the Irish Players started out at the Provincetown Theater, that miniature playhouse which was made from an old stable—I forget what they did to remodel it; I think they just put in an extra stall, to serve as the stage. Then part of the company got ambitious, left the rest downtown, and came up to the white-lit district. Now, almost anything that can be crowded under the head of acting goes, down in the Provincetown playhouse. But when the players appear in a regular theater, somehow it does not seem quite so refreshingly quaint for them to have learned by heart approximately one speech in each play, and to have to interpret their rôles standing almost in the wings, repeating each line word for word after the prompter.

The three playlets are "A Minute's Wait," Lady Gregory's "The Rising of the Moon," and Shaw's "O'Flaherty, V. C." The last named, it appears, was suppressed by the British government. The government must have had a clairvoyant vision of what the acting was going to be like.

But when all's said and done, a great and noble work is being done by the Irish Players. I can think of nothing that would so quickly convert one into a rampant Anglophile as an evening spent in witnessing their efforts.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

SO now you have come to the very last page of the magazine. We know that you don't look at this page till everything else in the number is exhausted, but we are not offended. You have read the novel, the short stories, the installment of the serial, the truth that is stranger than fiction about another "super-woman" whom Anice Terhune has brought back to us from the lavendered past, and you are wishing, we hope, that there were more to read. Why don't you become a literary critic?

HOW? It is easy. You can do it in a hammock, on a porch chair, under a beach umbrella, anywhere. Just think what you liked best in the magazine and then try to discover why you liked it. You'll never be quite able to tell what gives one story a stronger appeal than another. Literary criticism is an art, not a science. So much depends on the personality behind the story. At the same time, if you make a systematic effort to analyze your emotions and find out what causes them, you'll find out a good deal about the stories and about yourself.

ARE you a creature of prejudice in some respects? Probably you are. A prejudice about a really important thing, such as politics or religion, may possibly make the owner disagreeable and not good company. But a prejudice about a little thing, such as an objection to brown derbies and cloth-topped shoes for men, is like a dimple in the proper place—it may be quite a charming thing. Sweetness is simply sweet, but we mortals are so unregenerate as to find sweetness all by itself a little cloying. We like sweetness with a tang to it. So please have a few prejudices and admit them to yourself. There is no stronger bond than a good prejudice shared in common. If the prejudices are rather odd ones, they are all the better. A prejudice which practically everybody shares, such as an objection to dying or paying taxes, means nothing at all. There's nothing select and exclusive about it. But if you know a girl who hates strawberries with cream and can discover a man who has the same rather unusual feeling, introduce them and let nature take its course. You have the beginning of a real romance. For our part, if you don't like an author who splits his infinitives, we have an idea we would get on to-

gether. If you loathe a writer who uses the word "like" as a conjunction, we could shake you by the hand with true fervor. We are not sticklers or purists or anything of the kind, but there are certain things! You know how it is yourself.

INASMUCH as AINSLEE's is the best-known fiction magazine in the world, the discoverer of the greatest fiction writer of our generation, and the finest medium of its kind, we are naturally interested in literary criticism. And O. Henry is not the only AINSLEE discovery. Jack London, Conan Doyle, Joe Lincoln, Samuel Merwin, Holman Day—we could fill page after page with the famous names which first appeared in AINSLEE's. A man or woman can't be a good literary critic without being in love with good stories. The best part of criticism, the really important part, is the appreciation of the finer points, the real charms of good work. The good critic likes the better story, but he loves the best.

SO, at all events, let us not be content with just liking a thing, but let us find out why we like it. For instance, which do you prefer—a novelette by Constance Skinner, such as appears in the present number, or one by Josephine Meyer? Her latest and best novel yet will open the October AINSLEE's. It is called "The Sin of the Saintly." Surely you like the stories by Nancy Boyd which have appeared in the magazine from times to time. Why? Don't just be content to say that they are good. That isn't enough. What is it that makes them good? Use your head and find out. Incidentally there is a wonderful short story by Nancy Boyd, "Mr. Dallas Larabee, Sinner," coming out in the next issue. Don't think that they are all sinners in the next number, though. J. H. Greene's story "Voilà" in the same issue leaves a good taste in the mouth.

WE guarantee that if you start in being a literary critic, you will keep on at it. Incidentally, if you should happen to jot down any of your thoughts on a piece of paper and absently or accidentally put it in an envelope you have addressed to us in a fit of mental aberration, and, in the same fashion, should mail it to us, we should not mind it in the least.



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Confess a Corn

and millions can now tell you how to end it

Millions of people in the past few years have learned that corns are needless.

Corns are not one-half so common as they used to be. And the time is coming when a corn will be a rarity.

In two forms
now—plaster
and liquid

Ask for the
form you
like best



Those millions now use Blue-jay. Some use the plaster, some the liquid. Either form is applied in a jiffy—by a touch. Then the pain stops—the corn is forgotten. In a little time it loosens and comes out.

This is the scientific method—the modern way of dealing with a corn. It is supplanting old-time methods which are harsh and incorrect.

It is produced in a laboratory whose surgical dressings have a world-wide fame.

With the dainty shoes of now-a-days, corns can hardly be prevented. But the pain can be stopped and the corn can be quickly removed.

The suffering can all be avoided. Then you will know, as millions

Prove that tonight. Try Blue-jay on one corn. do, that nursing corns is folly.

B&B Blue-jay
Plaster or Liquid
The Scientific Corn Ender

BAUER & BLACK Chicago New York Toronto
Makers of Sterile Surgical Dressings and Allied Products

The advertisement features a black and white illustration. At the top, a box of Nabisco Sugar Wafers is shown, with the brand name 'NABISCO' prominently displayed. Below the box, a glass dish filled with cream and cherries sits on a decorative plate. To the left of the dish is a bouquet of daisies. The background is dark, making the white flowers and the light-colored cream stand out. The text is arranged in a column to the right of the central image.

NABISCO

NAT

BISCUIT

COMPANY

FLOWERS that bloom in the fall have delicious rivals in palate-delights that bloom the year around — tempting NABISCO Sugar Wafers.

These delicacies know no seasons, and appear everywhere, night and day. You will find them wherever beverages, ices or fruits are served. You will eat them for their very own goodness.

*Sold in the famous
In-cr-seal Trade Mark package*

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

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BE A CERTIFICATED ELECTRICIAN



WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME

A real position like this—for you

The country needs thousands of trained, **Certificated Electricians** to fill good positions—and at big pay. It's all a matter knowing how, and I will teach you by my up-to-date, modern instruction. You can learn at home, without interfering with your regular work, by my highly successful method of **Home Instruction in Practical Electricity**. Prepare NOW, and be ready in a few months to earn you

\$65 to \$175 a Week

Send for This Book

My book, "HOW TO BECOME AN EXPERT ELECTRICIAN," has started thousands of young men on the way to splendid success. A new edition of this book has just been printed. I want every young man interested in Electricity to have a copy, and will send you one **ABSOLUTELY FREE AND PREPAID**. Write me to-day.

How I Train My Students

As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly the kind of training a man needs to enable him to get and hold good positions, and to earn big pay. I have trained hundreds of men who are holding splendid electrical positions. Many are now successful Electrical Contractors.

I give each of my students personal attention and a complete and thorough training. I give him a **SPLENDID ELECTRICAL OUTFIT FREE**, and much of the training is done by actual work. When my students graduate and receive their Certificate they are ready for a real position. But still more, at any time you wish you can come to our splendidly equipped Electrical Shops for special training. No other school can give you this.

WRITE NOW—DON'T DELAY

Delay never got you anything. Action is what counts. Get started—and get started now. Write me, or send me the coupon, right NOW.

L. COOKE,
Chief Engineer
Dept. 439

Chicago Engineering Works
1918 Sunnyside Ave. CHICAGO

YOU CAN DO IT

A Real Opportunity for You

Wishing is never going to make your dreams come true. You've got to **study—to learn**. A man is worth \$2 or \$3 a day from his neck down—and no more; but there is **no limit** to what he can be worth from his neck up.

A trained mind is what gets the big pay. It is this training that you need, and I can train you in a few months. Are you ambitious to make a real success—then send me the coupon—to-day.

Electrical Outfit—Free

To every student who answers this ad I am giving a **Splendid Electrical Outfit** of standard size. Electrical Tools, Instruments, Materials, etc., **absolutely free**. Furthermore, to every Electrical Student I give a truly valuable surprise that I cannot explain here.

Free Employment Service

I am continually receiving requests from employers to send them trained Electrical men. I assist my students to secure good positions. I keep in touch with them for years, helping and advising them in every possible way.

Chief Engineer
COOKE,
Dept. 439
1918 Sunnyside Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

ST: Send at once—fully prepaid and entirely free—complete particulars of your great offer for this month.

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USE THIS "FREE OUTFIT" COUPON

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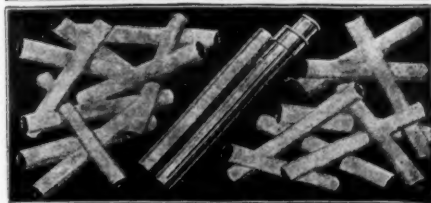
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Learn how to cut costs; how to eliminate waste; how to speed up production; how to handle the important problems entering into Industrial Management and you can name your own salary.

Business today is suffering from under production. Great organizations are ready to pay almost any price to men who can increase the output of shop, office or factory. Good management is based on 48 factors of efficiency. These factors and their practical application, you can quickly master by the LaSalle Problem Method of Home Training, under the direction of our large staff of industrial efficiency experts. Low cost. Easy monthly terms. Write now—for free particulars about this salary raising course.

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The Largest Business Training Institution in the World
Dept. 965-M Chicago, Illinois



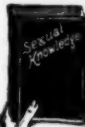
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A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for 50 cts. Address,

Turko Roller Co., Box 38, Station H, New York City



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What every young husband and

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Perfect fit, fine goods and tailoring.

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Dept 245 Chicago, Ill.

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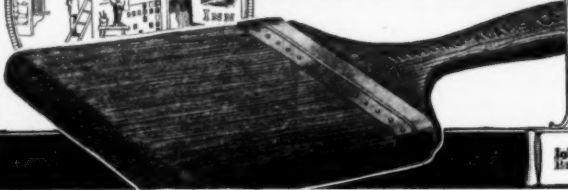
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"The proudest moment of our lives had come!"

"It was our own home! There were two glistening tears in Mary's eyes, yet a smile was on her lips. I knew what she was thinking.

"Five years before we had started bravely out together. The first month had taught us the old, old lesson that two cannot live as cheaply as one. I had left school in the grades to go to work and my all too thin pay envelope was a weekly reminder of my lack of training. In a year Betty came—three mouths to feed now. Meanwhile living costs were soaring. Only my salary and I were standing still.

"Then one night Mary came to me. 'Jim,' she said, 'Why don't you go to school again—right here at home? You can put in an hour or two after supper each night while I sew. Learn to do some one thing. You'll make good—I know you will.'

"Well, we talked it over and that very night I wrote to Scranton. A few days later I had taken up a course in the work I was in. It was surprising how rapidly the mysteries of our business became clear to me—took on a new fascination. In a little while an opening came. I was ready for it and was promoted—with an increase. Then I was advanced again. There was money enough to even lay a little aside. So it went.

"And now the fondest dream of all has come true. We have a real home of our own with the little comforts and luxuries Mary had always longed for, a little place, as she says, that 'Betty can be proud to grow up in.'

"I look back now in pity at those first blind stumbling years. Each evening after supper the doors of opportunity had swung wide and I had passed them by. How grateful I am that Mary helped me to see that night the golden hours that lay within."

"In city, town and country all over America there are men with happy families and prosperous homes because they let the International Correspondence Schools come to them in the hours after supper and prepare them for bigger work at better pay. More than two million men and women in the last 29 years have advanced themselves through spare time study with the I. C. S. Over one hundred thousand right now are turning their evenings to profit. Hundreds are starting every day.

Yes, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best. You can have a salary that will give your family the kind of home, the comforts, the little luxuries that you would like them to have. Yes, you can! No matter what your age, your occupation, or your means—you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it. That's fair, isn't it? Then mark and mail this coupon. There's no obligation and not a penny of cost. But it may be the most important step you ever took in your life.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS BOX 3622, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

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SELL our hosiery and underwear direct to consumer. Large line—good profits—prompt deliveries guaranteed. Samples ready. Write **The C & D Co.**, Dept. 15, Grand Rapids, Mich.

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AGENTS—\$40-\$100 week. Free samples. **Gold Sign Letters** any one can put on store windows. Liberal offer to general agents. **Metallic Letter Co.**, 481 E. N. Clark, Chicago.

SALESMAN—CITY OR TRAVELING. Experience unnecessary. Send for list of lines and full particulars. Prepare in spare time to earn the big salaries of \$2,500 to \$10,000 a year. Employment services rendered. **National Salesmen's Training Association**, Dept. 167, Chicago, Ill.

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AGENTS—Large manufacturer wants agents to sell hosiery, underwear, shirts, dresses, akirts, walas, shoes, clothing, etc. Write for free samples. **Madison Mills**, 503 Broadway, New York.

\$25 TO \$40 WEEKLY in your spare time doing special advertising work among the families of your city. No experience necessary. Write today for full particulars. **American Products Co.**, 3346 American Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

AMBITIOUS? WE WILL ESTABLISH you in business; manufacture article wanted everywhere under your name for 35c each (retailing \$1.50); show you how to reach consumers, dealers, agents, personally and by mail; furnish everything, and advertise for you free. Tremendous repeat business; **Kaley of Brooklyn** made \$1,000 one month. Write for prospectus. **Kaley Laboratories**, 258 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

NEW DISCOVERY! Big steady income. Spare time. No canvassing or mail order. **Ferber Company**, 296 Broadway, New York.

EXTRAORDINARY opportunity offered ambitious men to become distributors for new product being marketed. No competition; demand everywhere. Valuable exclusive rights free. Complete sales helps and full cooperation assures success. Start small and grow. \$1,000 automobile free. Opportunity to establish business netting \$10,000 yearly. **Garfield Mfg. Co.**, Dept. S, Garfield Bldg., Brooklyn, N. Y.

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WRITE the Words for a Song. We write music and guarantee to secure publication. Submit poems on any subject. **Brooklyn Studios**, 1594 Fitzgerald Building, New York.

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WRITE WORDS FOR A SONG.—We write music, publish and secure copyright. Submit poems on any subject. **The Metropolitan Studios**, 914 S. Michigan Avenue, Room 120, Chicago.

HARDING'S (Established sixty years) prints, publishes, composes and arranges music for authors. Catalogs and music free for stamp. **Frank Harding**, Music Dept., 228 East 52d St., New York.

SONG-WRITERS' GUIDE SENT FREE! Contains valuable instructions and advice. Submit song-poems for examination. We will furnish music, copyright and facilitate publication or sale. **Kinkerbocker Studios**, 301 Galety Bldg., New York.

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YOU WRITE the Words for a Song. We'll compose the music free and publish same. Send Song-Poem to-day. **B. Lenox Co.**, 271 W. 125th St., New York.

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FREE to writers—A wonderful list of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas. **The A B C of successful Story and Screenwriting**. Absolutely Free. Just send Authors' Press, Dept. 89, Auburn, N. E.

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Candy

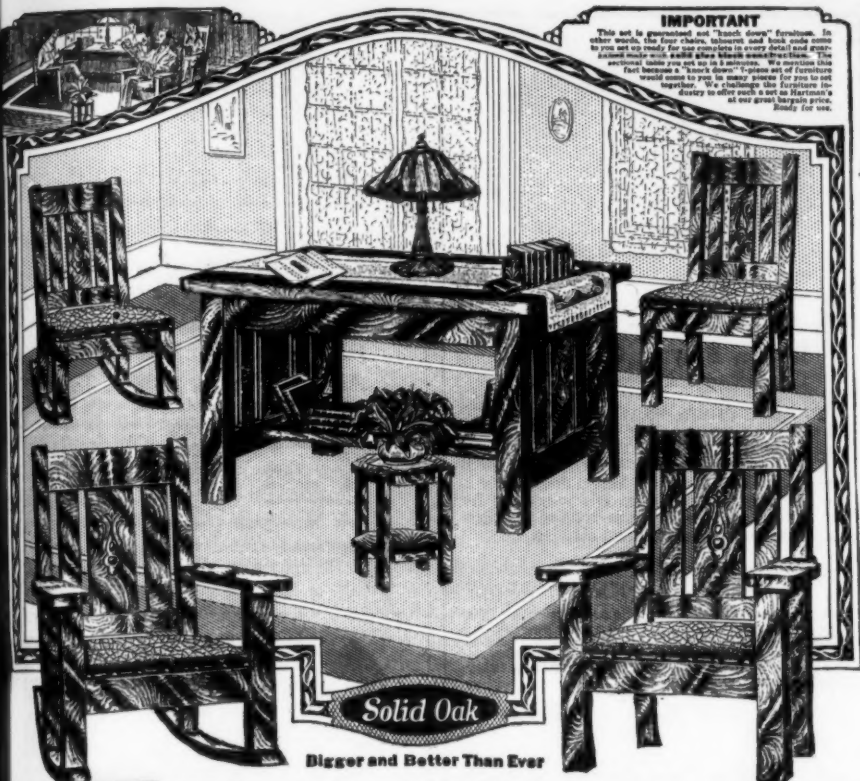
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IMPORTANT

This set is guaranteed not "hunch down" furniture. In other words, the floor chairs, tabouret and book ends come by you as one piece in every detail and guarantee to last for many years. We mention this fact because a "hunch down" furniture would mean to you the money you paid for you to get together. We challenge the furniture industry to offer such a set as Hartman's at our great bargain price. Ready for use.



Solid Oak

Bigger and Better Than Ever

Brings the NEW Hartman 7-Piece Solid Construction Living Room Suite

Even better than ever is this famous suite—made more massive, still more sturdy in construction—a marvelous work of the furniture makers' art—the masterpiece for 1920-21—sent for only \$1 now and on 30 days' free trial.

Full Year to Pay

If you don't find this splendid suite just what you want, return it and we will refund the \$1 and pay freight both ways. If you keep it, pay balance, only \$3 monthly—a whole year to pay (see coupon).

Complete suite consists of large arm rocker, large arm chair, library table, sewing rocker, desk or side chair, tabouret and book ends. Genuine mission, rich brown finish showing the beauty of the grain of the wood.

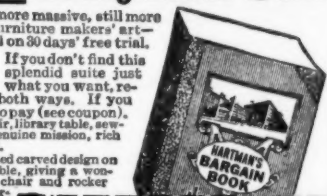
Solid Oak

Ornamented with richly embossed carved design on panels of chairs, rockers and table, giving a wonderfully pleasing effect. The chair and rocker seats are constructed in a strong, durable manner and upholstered in imitation Spanish brown leather. Most comfortable, lasting and beautiful. Large arm chair and large rocker stand 35 inches high overall from floor, are 25½ inches wide over all and have seats 21½ inches. Other rocker and chair have seats 17x15½ inches. Handsome table is 24x36 inches and tabouret has octagon-shaped top about 12 inches wide, standing 17 inches high. Book ends just the right size and weight to easily support large books. Shipped from factory in central Indiana or factory in western New York state. Shipping weight about 140 lbs. Order by No. 1108BMA. Price \$38.85. Pay \$1 down. Balance \$3.00 monthly.

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HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

3913 Wentworth Ave., Dept. 2709 Chicago



HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
3913 Wentworth Ave. Dept. 2709 Chicago

Enclosed find \$1. Send the 7-Piece Living Room Suite No. 1108BMA as described. Guaranteed not "knock down." I am to have 30 days' trial. If not satisfied will ship it back and you will refund my \$1 and pay freight both ways. If I keep it I will pay \$3.00 per month until the price \$38.85 is paid.

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City..... State.....

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A Big Raise in Salary

Is Very Easy to Get, if You
Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

Remember When You Were a Kid

and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to success and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you get it. Write or print your name on the coupon and send it in today.

American School of Correspondence

Dept. G-64, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

American School of Correspondence,

Dept. G-64, Chicago, Ill.

I want job checked—tell me how to get it.

.....Architect.	\$5,000 to \$15,000Lawyer.	\$5,000 to \$15,000
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.....Automobile Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000Shop Superintendent.	\$3,000 to \$7,000
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.....Electrical Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000High School Graduate.	In two years.
.....General Education.	In one year.Fire Insurance Expert.	\$3,000 to \$10,000

Name..... Address.....

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All Pain

**Headaches
Neuralgias
Colds and La Grippe
Women's Aches and Ills
Rheumatic and Sciatic Pains**
*Ask Your Druggist for A-K Tablets
(If he cannot supply you, write us)*

Small Size
10c



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See Monogram **A-K** on the Genuine
The Antikamnia Remedy Company, St. Louis, Mo.
Write for Free Samples



FREE DIAMOND RING OFFER

Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian diamonds—the greatest discovery to date—has ever known. We will send you free this 14k gold ring, set with a 14.14 ct. brilliant cut diamond—in beautiful presentation box. Pay postmaster \$1.25 C.O.D. charges to cover postage, box, etc. handling, etc. If you can tell it from a diamond return no money refunded. 10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer quick. Send size of finger.

KRAUTH & REED, Dept. 44
MASONIC TEMPLE CHICAGO

Your Chance to Make Big Profits in Vulcanizing

Here is your chance to get into a highly profitable business which will make you independent. High class vulcanizing are in demand everywhere.

Many of our graduates make \$3,000 a year and over. We make the Anderson steam vulcanizer and Anderson retreader and teach you the famous Anderson Method of Vulcanizing. Our students can make good money they can do superior work with the Anderson machine and method and do it at one-tenth the cost required by all other vulcanizers. Highly satisfied customers and large profits mean a paying business. Not only are we able to continue you of this, but we invite you to compare the Anderson machine and method with others.

We have installed Anderson schools of vulcanizing the Anderson method of vulcanizing. The course requires 5 to 10 days and costs \$35. If you buy an Anderson vulcanizer we return your \$35 and pay you \$5 per day expense money while learning. Our reputation is valuable. We expect Anderson vulcanizers to do work which will outlast the rest of the time. We expect Anderson students to succeed in a business way. The success is our success. Therefore we do not sell our Anderson vulcanizer to anyone who has not received our course of instruction.

Don't miss this opportunity. Write today for full particulars and address of Anderson school nearest to you.

ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER CO.
32 Williams Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind., U. S. A.
Print your name to avoid mistakes

Quick! Your Horn

—and a fraction of a second
might mean an accident
that you could never forget.
WHY TAKE A CHANCE?

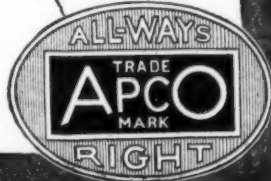


Horn Button

—attaches to the throttle lever where it is under the driver's fingers at all times, leaving the hands on the wheel where they belong, especially in an emergency that requires the quick sounding of the horn. The installation is very simple, requiring no special tools or machine work. Furnished complete with directions.

Write for catalog showing every Ford need in the Apco line. Insist that every attachment you buy for your Ford bears the Apco name. Why not be sure of the best your money will buy?

APCO MANUFACTURING CO.
PROVIDENCE U. S. A.



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Home Study Business Courses

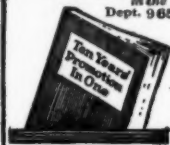
Do you want an important, high-salaried position? You can have one if you can do the work. LaSalle experts will show you how, guide you step by step to success and help solve your personal business problems. Our plan enables you to be in during spare hours without interference with your present duties. Give us your name and address and mark with an "X" below the kind of position you want to fill. We will mail catalog and full particulars regarding our low cost monthly payment plan. Also our valuable book for ambitious men, "Ten Years' Promotion In One". Tear out and mail this advertisement today. No obligation to you. Let us prove to you how this step has helped thousands of ambitious men to real success.

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Training for positions as Auditors, Comptrollers, Certified Public Accountants, Cost Accountants, etc.
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Training for Official, Managerial, Sales and Executive Positions.
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The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

Dept. 985-R Chicago, Illinois



(Name) _____

(Present Position) _____

(Address) _____



Like sleeping on a
fleecy cloud

As you recline on an Ostermoor your muscles and nerves relax—a few moments of drowsiness—and you drift into slumberland.

OSTERMOOR MATTRESS

No bumps, lumps, hollows, or sagging. Eight billowy Ostermoor sheets are hand laid in a tailor-made tick and carefully tufted.

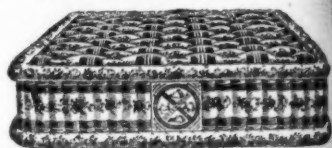
Insist that the mattress you buy is an Ostermoor. And look for the Ostermoor label. Sold by good dealers everywhere.

Send for free samples of ticking and big catalog. If convenient, visit our big salesrooms in New York.

OSTERMOOR & COMPANY
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of Montreal, Ltd.,
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Picture-Play Magazine?

Bubbling Over With Screen News

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Elgin Watch

14-Kt. Gold-Filled Case 20-year Guarantee

On 10-Day Trial

Now, this model Elgin watch, warranted movement in 14-Kt. gold-filled case, 20-year guarantee.

Decide for yourself. If you know this beautiful high class watch will be sold for at least three cents a day.

Chain and Knife FREE

A 14-Kt. gold filled watch and chain absolutely free on this offer. Stop if you wish. If sold elsewhere in cutlery, jewelry, or watch store.



Less Than 7c a Day

If you are pleased when the watch comes send only \$1.00 as first payment. The next the watch for ten full days. If you do not consider it the greatest

value in America, return it at our expense and your deposit will be refunded immediately. If you decide to buy, send \$2.00 a month until \$10.00 is paid.

Order Today - On Trial

name or address. State which chain you wish. This is limited. Act now. Send your name to Dept. 90-G.

Our 125-page catalog shows more than 2000 bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry. Write for it NOW.

J.M. LYON & CO., 1 Maiden Lane, New York, N.Y.



The Dollar Value of High School Training

HAVE you ever thought *why* so many employers demand a High School training of their employees—why the lack of it bars you from the best positions? Take English and Mathematics, for example. What high-grade position—such as accounting, engineering or executive work—can be handled *rightly* without a knowledge of mathematics? How can costs, operating expenses and overhead be accurately computed without it? How can you write good business letters and reports or sell goods without a command of English? There is a positive cash value to having a High School training. It means many more dollars to you, because it throws open to you high-grade positions from which you are now barred.

Don't Be Handicapped

Thousands like YOU—who were laboring under the handicap of not having had a High School training—have taken advantage of the American School course and REMOVED THEIR HANDICAPS. This course has been specially prepared for home study by noted professors. It is complete, covers all requirements, and will remove the biggest obstacle between you and success.

If you have already had some part of a High School training, you can start in exactly where you left off. We'll credit you with what you have taken and make the tuition fee in proportion with the special course you require.

Read this Guarantee—then Act

"We guarantee at any time during the first year of your enrollment to refund the entire amount paid if, immediately upon the completion of ten examinations, you notify the School that you are not satisfied with your course."

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF
Correspondence
Dept. HC4
CHICAGO



TRAINING—THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Please send me booklet and tell me how I can fit myself for the position marked X

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| Airplane Mechanic | Stenographer |
| Fire Insurance Expert | Gen'l Education Course |
| Sanitary Engineer | Com. School Branches |
| Heating and Ventilating Engineer | Electrical Engineer |
| Master Plumber | Electric Light and Power Superintendent |
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| Mechanical Engineer | Architect |
| Shop Superintendent | Building Contractor |

Name

Address

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"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old. The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Write for Free Booklet containing testimonials of users all over the country. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 758, 26 S. 15 St., Phila.

PSC'S

for Coughs & Colds

Cuticura Talcum

Fascinatingly Fragrant

Always Healthful

Sample free of Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden Mass. Everywhere else.

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FREE
Send the Coupon

Ready now! The wonderful Baird-North Style Book for Fall. Shows most exclusive fashions, how to select the style best suited to you and how to get quality clothes at prices which give you best values. It is free. Send coupon or a post card—today.

Two examples of Baird-North values given here. Order either or both of these direct from this ad.

Sport Hat

Soft Duveltyne—richly embroidered all over in floss and metallic thread. Close fitting upturned flexible brim. Drop ornaments at front. Very chic. Look where you will and you will not see a smarter model. Choice of four colors.

Order Orange by No. 19E9601. Order Brown by No. 19E9603. Order Navy Blue by No. 19E9605. Order Rose by No. 19E9607. Price \$9.75. Postage 10c extra.

Scarf Coatee

No need to "look around" if you want a stunning over-garment. Look at this shaggy scarf coatee, knitted on soft, lustrous camel's hair wool. Very warm. About 72 in. long, 22 in. wide. Lengthened with close fringe. Belted and has 2 pockets. See if you can equal it for class and serviceable quality. Choice of 3 colors. Order Brown by No. 14E5937. Buff (tan) No. 14E-5939. Peacock Blue No. 14E-5941. Price only \$10.98. Postage 6 cents extra.

NOW Get the book and see the other great offerings in fashion's latest modes. No other book like this. It is your reliable guide. Send the coupon today.

Baird-North Co.

391 Broad St. Providence, R. I.
Gentlemen: Please send me a copy of your book of advance Fall styles.

Name
Address

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Send No Money!

Ladies' Solitaire—
Examination Free,
10 Months to Pay.

Examine ring FIRST,
then if you decide
to keep it
pay only
\$2.00. Buy-
ing direct
assures
you the
Rock Bot-
tom Price.
A perfectly cut blue-
white Diamond in
ladies' solid gold set-
ting at only \$2.80 a
month!

Take Advantage of
this amazing offer
to-day. YOUR
MONEY BACK if
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No Security—No red tape.

A POSTAL BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST DIAMOND
WATCH AND JEWELRY BOOK EVER PUBLISHED
Whether you order this ring or not, let us send
you this De Luxe Catalog FREE, containing
descriptions of rings, watches, diamonds and
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"THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"
LW-SWEET INC
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

Copyrighted 1929 by L. W. Sweet, Inc.

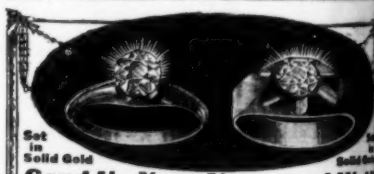
Clear Your Skin

YOUR skin can be quickly cleared
of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne
Eruptions on the face or body,
Enlarged Pores and Oily or Shiny
Skin by a new treatment called

"Clear-Tone"

If you have any of the above Facial Blemishes, write for FREE Booklet, "A Clear-Tone Skin?" telling how I cured myself after being afflicted for 16 years, and my offer to send a bottle of Clear-Tone on trial.

E. S. GIVENS 118 Chemical Building,
Kansas City, Missouri



Set
in
Solid Gold

Set
in
Solid Platinum

**Send Us Your Name and We'll
Send You a Lachnite**

DON'T send a penny. Just say: "Send me a Lachnite mounted in a solid gold ring on 10 day's free trial." We will mail it prepaid right to your home. When it comes money deposit it with the money and wear the ring for 10 full days. If you, or any of your friends can get a diamond, send it back and we will return your Lachnite. If you decide to buy it—send us \$2.00 a month until \$10.75 has been paid. Write Today Send your name now. Tell us which of the solid gold rings you wish (index or annular) so we can send your finger size.

Harold Lachman Co., 12 N. Michigan Av., Dept. 1936, Chicago

SUGAR 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ c Per Lb.

You know how hard it is to get sugar, even when you pay the big price demanded by grocers, and what it means to be able to buy it direct from us at only 4½ cents a pound. Yet sugar is only one of a long list of groceries on which we can save you money. Just in order to prove what a big advantage you have in dealing with us, we list below a trial order which saves you \$1.20. Regular value of these articles is \$3.19—our price only \$1.99. And we guarantee that every item is absolutely pure, fresh, standard high grade—just what you have been paying about twice our wholesale price for. You wouldn't think of going back to the costly old way of buying groceries after you have proved the economy of buying from the Big 4 Grocery Bargain Catalog. Send only \$1.99 with the Trial Order Coupon below, and begin saving money right away.

Catalog Bargains

Remember that with your first order you get a free copy of our big wholesale catalog which saves you money on all your grocery purchases. Here are just a few catalog specials. Sold in wonderful money-saving combinations.

FLOUR, Per Barrel **\$7⁹⁸**

SUGAR 100 Lbs. **\$4⁵⁰**

Uneeda Biscuits 12 Packages for **35c**

Quaker Oats Large Package **4c**

Rush your trial order at once and get our wholesale grocery catalog in which you will find many of the most startling grocery bargains ever offered.

References We are one of the leading Wholesale Grocers in Chicago. Our bank, Foreman Bros. Banking Co., or any mercantile institution in Chicago, can tell you about us.

We Guarantee you absolute satisfaction or your money back. In every instance you get pure, fresh goods of the very highest quality. Send coupon for trial order today.

BIG 4 COMPANY

112-118 N. May St. Dept. 1141 Chicago

Trial Order No. 14

Big 4 Wholesale Prices

2 pounds Granulated Sugar . . .	\$0.09
1 bar Fels Naptha Soap02
1 bar Ivory Soap04
1 package Big 4 Brand Best Tea . .	.35
¼ pound pure Cocoa13
1 pound pure Baking Powder45
1 4-oz. bottle Vanilla Flavor Extract	.52
1 box Powdered Bluing (equal to about	
1 gallon average best bluing)29
1 Box Majic Dye Soap Flakes10
Total (You Save \$1.20)	\$1.99

Mail Coupon Now!

Our low prices merely indicate what you can now save on all your groceries, a full line of which is listed in our Wholesale Catalog—The Big Money Saver. This catalog sent to customers only. A free copy will be sent with your first order. Send coupon NOW—TODAY.

Trial Order Coupon

Big 4 Company Dept. 1141

112-118 N. May St., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:—Enclosed find \$1.99 for which send me at once your Trial Order No. 14, and a copy of your Wholesale Grocery Catalog, free. It is understood that if I am not satisfied, I may return the goods at your expense and you will return my money at once.

Name

Address

Express Office

On Every Hand!



EVERY living man and woman with hands should own at least one pair of Boss Work Gloves.

They protect from dirt, dust, grease, and many minor injuries.

In spite of their sturdy, wear-well texture and construction Boss Work Gloves are not clumsy. They allow you free "feel" of your work.

And there is no end to their usefulness. And they are so economically priced that every one can afford them.

The mechanic or teamster at his work, the

housewife at hers—men, women, girls, boys, everybody, everywhere need Boss Work Gloves.

Keep a pair handy and slip them on whenever you work with your hands—even in doing the little odd jobs about the house such as tending the furnace, beating the rugs, taking down the screens, working in the garden, changing a tire, cutting the grass or making ice cream.

Boss Work Gloves are made with band, ribbed, and gauntlet wrists. Sizes for men, women, boys and girls in varying weights to suit every conceivable requirement.

THE BOSS MEEDY—The world's favorite work glove for odd jobs around the house and garden, and all light hand work. Made of the best quality, medium weight canton flannel.

THE BOSS HEVY—The best bet for all work that requires a strong, wear-resisting glove. Made of the very best quality, heavy weight canton flannel.

THE BOSS XTRA HEVY—The world's champion heavyweight hand-wear for rough work. Made of the finest grade of extra heavy canton flannel.

THE BOSS WALLOPER—This is the super work glove. Strong, flexible and built for rugged work. Made of the highest quality, heaviest weight canton flannel.

The Boss line includes highest quality leather-palm, jersey, ticking and canton flannel gloves and mittens

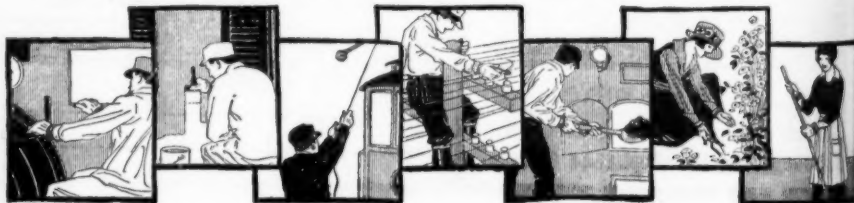
THE BOSS MANUFACTURING CO., Kewanee, Ill.



Trade Mark

This Trade-mark identifies genuine Boss Work Gloves.

Be sure it is on every pair you buy.



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Teach Them To Say “Hires”

HIRES is good for all ages—at all times. Every one of the sixteen Hires ingredients is a product of Nature from the woods and fields, collected from all parts of the world.

Nothing goes into Hires but the pure healthful juices of roots, barks, herbs, berries—and pure cane sugar. The quality of Hires is maintained in spite of tremendously increased cost of ingredients. Yet you pay no more for Hires the genuine than you do for an artificial imitation.

But be sure you say “Hires” to get Hires. At fountains, or in bottles, at your dealers. Keep a case at home and always have Hires on ice as first aid to parched palates.

THE CHARLES E. HIRES COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

Hires

Hires contains juices of 16 roots, barks, herbs and berries

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

The Brunswick Method of Reproduction



A Finer Reproducer *that plays ALL makes of records*

The Ultona, pictured above, is one of the many advancements offered by the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

At a turn of the hand, it presents to each type of record the proper needle, the proper diaphragm and the exact weight, thus playing each record as intended. No attachments are necessary.

Each record is heard at its best, for the Ultona develops hitherto hidden tones and brings out all the beautiful shadings. This is a great invention found exclusively on The Brunswick. It alone should make your choice a Brunswick.

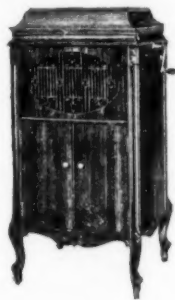
But there are other dominating superiorities. As, for instance, the Brunswick Tone

Amplifier, built entirely of wood. The old-time, cast-metal throat is abandoned.

The Brunswick Amplifier develops tones scientifically, according to acoustic laws. Tone is fuller, completer and absolutely realistic. Metallic sounds are absent.

These and other features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction have accounted for the tremendous success of this super-phonograph. The most critical music-lovers have made it their choice. So will you, once you hear it. For its superiority is instantly evident.

Go to a Brunswick dealer before you make your choice. Ask to hear The Brunswick. Note its superiorities.



THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER COMPANY
General Offices: 623-633 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

Branch Houses in Principal Cities of United States, Mexico and Canada

Canadian Distributors: Musical Merchandise Sales Co., 819 Yonge St., Toronto

Brunswick
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Sharp? Oh Boy!

THERE'S nothing like these wonderful Durham-Duplex Blades for a cool, safe, satisfying shave. Made from the finest Swedish steel, oil-tempered, hollow-ground and sharpened to an exquisite cutting edge. Extra long and double-edged to give you the greatest shaving mileage. And *guarded* to give you absolute protection when shaving.



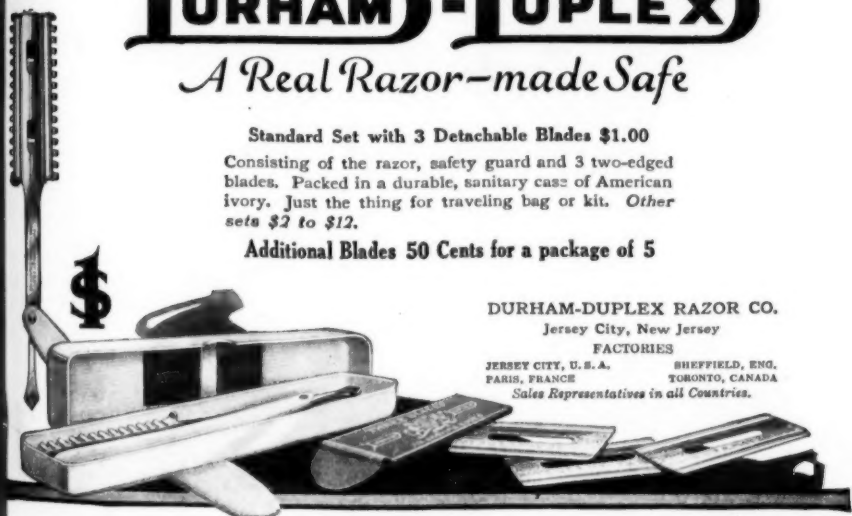
DURHAM-DUPLEX

A Real Razor—made Safe

Standard Set with 3 Detachable Blades \$1.00

Consisting of the razor, safety guard and 3 two-edged blades. Packed in a durable, sanitary case of American ivory. Just the thing for traveling bag or kit. Other sets \$2 to \$12.

Additional Blades 50 Cents for a package of 5



DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO.
Jersey City, New Jersey
FACTORIES

JERSEY CITY, U. S. A.

PARIS, FRANCE

SHEFFIELD, ENG.

TOBONTO, CANADA

Sales Representatives in all Countries.



"The milk-white pearls of the neck-
lace which she (Amy Robsart) wore
..... were excelled in purity by her
teeth."

—*Kindred, by Sir Walter Scott.*

"The mouth parted
its rose-scarlet, bow-shipped
lips, showing the reflection
of her more and handsome
teeth."

—*Mary Barton, by Maria Browne.*

"She put the question gently and
even gave him a little smile. The
exquisiteness of it, her pearly teeth,
flushed him from head to foot."

—*In Apple-Bliss Time, by Clara Louise Bowen.*

"She had wonderful eyes, violet;
her lips, parted smilingly, gave a hint
of flashing teeth."

—*The Cavalier Man, by Ernest Gardner.*

"Some asked how pearls
did grow, and where?
Then spoke I to my girl
To part her lips, and showed them there
The quarelets of pearl."

—*The Book of Ruth, by Robert Herrick.*

"She laughed, show-
ing a glimpse of white,
pearly teeth between the delicately
chiseled lips, slightly parted."

—*The Gleaners, by C. Klein.*

**Do most authors call them
"pearly?"**

Notice as you read—and send us a
quotation describing pretty teeth,
whether "pearly" or not. We will
send a free trial tube of Ribbon
Dental Cream in return—but only
one to a person. Give title, author
and page with your quotation. Ad-
dress Colgate & Co., Dept. A, 199
Fulton St., New York.

The Charm of Heroines

AN author, with his power to make his heroine what he
wishes, thoughtfully endows her with beautiful teeth.

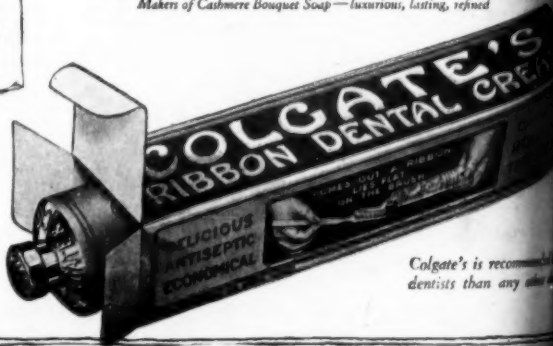
Strong, clean, white teeth add charm to a smile—even more
truly in life than in books.

The smile worth while is a Colgate smile—have you one?
Colgate's Ribbon Dental Cream used regularly and thoroughly
twice-a-day makes for clean, healthy, beautiful teeth.

Colgate's is neither gritty, nor over-medicated. It *cleans*—
efficiently, pleasantly and safely.

The delicious flavor of Colgate's makes it easy to acquire
the good habit of twice-a-day care.

COLGATE & CO., Established 1806 **New York**
In Canada: 8 St. Helen Street and 137 McGill Street, Montreal
Makers of Cashmere Bouquet Soap—luxurious, lasting, refined



Colgate's is recommended
by more dentists than any other